THE SHEPHERD OF THE SEA

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THE SHEPHERD OF THE SEA

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

W. L. WATKINSON

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To

The Right Honourable

THOMAS R. FERENS, P.C.,

Holderness House, Hull,

the warm Friend of all good causes

This volume is respectfully dedicated by
His Fellow Citizen,

With Sincere Esteem and Admiration

The substance of several of these discourses appeared in a series of papers in the 'Sunday at Home,' but they have all been re-written for the present volume.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	THE SHEPHERD OF THE SEA PSALM lxxvii. 19, 20.	9
II.	THE UNFAILING LIGHT PSALM cxix. 105; 2 PETER i. 19.	23
III.	THE VICTORY OF PATIENCE 2 SAMUEL xi. 1; JAMES v. 7.	39
IV.	THE PERSONAL EQUATION IN CHRISTIAN BELIEF 1 CORINTHIANS xv. 32-34.	51
V.	THE MAGIC OF GRACE 2 CORINTHIANS v. 17.	65
VI.	THE TRIUMPH OF THE SPRING ISAIAH xxxii. 15.	79
VII.	THE INDWELLING SPIRIT EPHESIANS iii. 14-16.	94
VIII.	THE LAW OF LIBERTY ROMANS viii. 1, 2.	109
IX.	THE PRINCIPLE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH COLOSSIANS i. 9, 10.	123
X.	THE CONQUEST OF INVIDIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE ISAIAH lviii. 11.	136
XI.	THE CHIEF JOY PHILIPPIANS iv. 4.	149
XII.	THE TABLE-LANDS OF THE PERFECTED LIFE EPHESIANS i. 3, 4.	162

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
XIII.	The Assurance of Hope Hebrews vi. 17-19.	175
XIV.	The Royalty of Service John xiii. 3-5.	187
XV.	The Retarded Triumph Jeremiah xxxi. 16.	200
XVI.	The Snare of Unreality Luke xii. 1.	212
XVII.	The Blight of Unbelief Matthew xvi. 6.	227
XVIII.	The Lure of Compromise Mark viii. 15.	241

I

THE SHEPHERD OF THE SEA

Thy way was in the sea, and Thy paths in the great waters, and Thy footsteps were not known. Thou leddest Thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.—Ps. lxxvii. 19, 20.

It is essential to our peace of mind that we be satisfied as to the rationality of life ; that is, that life is ordered to some worthy end. We can never reconcile ourselves to the belief that Nature is the result of a 'fortuitous concourse of atoms' ; that history is a turbid flow of unrelated accidents ; or that our private life is aimless, purposeless. Whatever may be the fact as to the prevalence of chance or design in human life and terrestrial things, we certainly hope that it is the latter ; we find it difficult not to believe in order and purpose, and only when we have satisfied ourselves as to the existence and perfection of a presiding government are we at rest. We are never sincerely and deeply content until we arrive at the conviction that the world and life are dominated by a Providence that is wise, just, and good. Carlyle, writing to Emerson, makes this confession : 'My belief in a special Providence grows yearly stronger, unsubduable, impregnable.'[1] Such a belief is essential to our peace of mind.

Revelation justifies our intuition, teaching everywhere that all creatures and events are subject to the will and purpose of an all-wise God. In the arrangement of his library Napoleon placed the Bible

[1] *Correspondence*, p. 69.

in the political section, and so far we may admit the correctness of his judgement. A considerable portion of it contains a record of the mind and purpose of God in action, as disclosed in history; whilst the prophetic portion is occupied chiefly in the anticipation of the ultimate triumph of the Almighty's programme and design. From the Book of Genesis to that of the Revelation we witness the evolution of an all-comprehending sovereignty; one that recognizes alike things great and small, and through a wise and just administration seeks the universal good.

Yet, in the face of the world as it is, of things as they are and as they ever have been, we find it difficult to maintain this faith. The actual facts of history and of contemporaneous life seem often in violent collision with our creed, and greatly trouble us. From the very beginning history has progressed through the tumultuous, the destructive, the tragic; through the shipwreck of empire and the travail of ages. 'Thy way was in the sea, and Thy paths in the great waters.' The primitive people had no history, their whole existence being a blind and bitter striving; whilst the successive stages and scenes of subsequent history are crowded with episodes of strife and suffering. The story of the race is long and sorrowful. It has paid a severe price for whatever it has gained. Nothing has come to it easily or cheaply. Not a cell in our brain but was fashioned in the furnace; not a fibre of our being but was wrought on the anvil; not a trembling chord of our moral sense but was strung and tuned by the discipline of pain. The stair by which we have ascended, sloping through darkness up to God, is no royal road, but a steep spiral that must be climbed with bleeding feet. 'For we know that the whole creation

groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now' (Rom. viii. 22). Yes, 'until *now*'; for never was the groan more deep, or the anguish more intense, than in our day.

Such is the actual condition of things confronting us, which we are called upon to reconcile with optimistic doctrine. Frankly acknowledging the difficulty, let us see what solid ground yet remains for a confident faith.

I. We recognize *the difficulty attending belief in a divine purpose.* If peace of mind is possible only whilst we assume that life is divinely ordered to some worthy end, it must be allowed that the existence of such a heavenly will, guiding and compelling man to a definite and an adequate result, often appears doubtful, and sometimes more than doubtful. No great thinker of our generation has felt the difficulty of recognizing design in Nature more acutely than Darwin, or stated the case more fairly, and it is instructive to study his position. The general aspect of the glorious universe made it impossible for him to believe in chance. So he writes: 'Another source of conviction in the existence of God, connected with the reason, and not with the feelings, impresses me as having much more weight. This follows from the extreme difficulty, or rather impossibility, of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe, including man with his capacity of looking far backwards and far into futurity, as the result of blind chance or necessity.'[1] Again, in a letter to Asa Gray, he writes: 'I own that I cannot see as plainly as others do, and as I could wish to do, evidence of design and beneficence on all sides of us. There seems too much misery in the world. . . . On the

[1] *Life and Letters*, vol. i., p. 312.

other hand, I cannot anyhow be contented to view this wonderful universe, and especially the nature of man, and to conclude that everything is the result of brute force. I am inclined to look at everything as resulting from divine laws, with the details, whether good or bad, left to the working out of what we may call chance. Not that this notion *at all* satisfies me.'[1] And, once more, ' I grieve to say that I cannot honestly go as far as you do about Design. I am conscious that I am in an utterly hopeless muddle. I cannot think that the world, as we see it, is the result of chance ; and yet I cannot look at each separate thing as the result of Design.'[2]

Is not this dilemma that of many thinking men, who, like Darwin, are not by any means atheistically inclined? Whilst they contemplate Nature as a whole, they cannot do otherwise than admire its unity, magnificence, and goodness ; yet they fail to reconcile ' each separate thing ' with the general aspect ; this, that, and the other detail are not in keeping with the larger and happier interpretation, —nay, they often seem directly to traverse it. Humboldt quotes Aristotle to the effect that ' In the unity of Nature there is nothing unconnected or out of place, as in a bad tragedy ' ; yet certainly things often appear out of place, and otherwise incongruous with the principles and moral of the great drama, taken as a whole.

But is there not a very real consolation and suggested hopefulness involved in this dilemma? The disturbing factor is the isolated detail, the general laws and their working being entirely satisfactory. Whatever may be the gaps and anomalies occasioned by the detail, the grand unity is maintained ;

[1] Ibid., vol. ii., p. 312. [2] Ibid., p. 353.

whatever may be the several discordances created by individual movements, they do not to any appreciable extent mar the vaster music; whatever may be the partial deformities and discolorations which offend us, they are not sufficient to blemish the splendour of the masterpiece. The things that puzzle and pain are the exceptional details, not the essential, universal laws and their normal action. And is it not possible, nay, is it not probable, that these subordinate discords may be capable of an explanation that will leave free from the latest shadow of suspicion the one good and perfect Will that is so conspicuous in creation?

Darwin's perplexity was chiefly caused by the contradictions of the physical sphere; yet a corresponding difficulty is suggested by social experience and history. In the individual life we have the consciousness, that, on the whole, things work together for good, yet many details are hard to bear and impossible to understand; and whilst the philosophical historian finds sequence and progress in the history of the race, the signs of a prevailing and beneficent underlying purpose, there are yet ugly, chaotic, and painful incidents to be explained. Here, once more, the main aspects are satisfactory; and if not always so clear and convincing as in Nature, we may remember how seriously the development of the divine purpose in the fortunes of mankind has been disturbed and obscured by our ignorance, folly, and wickedness.

There is no sufficient reason that we should infer with Darwin that the major part of Nature is governed by intelligent and beneficent law, whilst the rest is left to chance; it seems much more logical to conclude with Asa Gray that one supreme purpose runs

through the whole creation and the ages, despite many appearances to the contrary. 'For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen' (Rom. xi. 36).

II. *The difficulty attending belief in the divine wisdom.* How the regulation of mundane affairs is consistent with rationality is by no means always apparent; again and again we fail to follow God's method. Contradiction, discord, abortion, failure, or what appears to be such, occasion us painful perplexity. Our reason is confounded, as ages ago was that of Job. 'Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, when He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him' (xxiii. 8, 9). And we are ready to complain with the psalmist, 'How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?' (lxxiii. 11). Some will even profanely dare to speak of Nature and of the government of the world as examples of colossal blundering.

Yet ought we, children of a day and knowing nothing, to be surprised that the universe exhibits works and movements surpassing our comprehension? When Michael Angelo was in the midst of building St. Peter's, the cardinals accused him of incompetence, and of destroying the work of his predecessors. But the artist declined to justify himself, and refused all discussion. Said he, 'I am not obliged to communicate either to you or to any one that which I ought or wish to do. Your business is to look after the expenses. The remainder is my affair.' When the workmen complained, he replied, 'Your business is to build, to hew, to do joiner's work, and to carry out my orders. As to

knowing what is in my mind, that you will never learn, for it would be against my dignity to tell you.' How much more, then, shall the Architect and Builder of the universe surpass our knowledge and smile at our criticisms? 'For God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against Him? For He giveth not account of any of His matters' (Job xxxiii. 12, 13). 'God is greater than man.' How strange that it was ever necessary to say so! How astonishing our effrontery! Seeing the marvel is that we understand anything, how can we presume to understand everything? The truest sign of our greatness is that we stand dumb before the mysteries of the majestic universe.

But have we not the strongest reasons to confide in Him who stands within the darkness, ordering all things according to the counsel of His own will? The Old Testament is never weary of celebrating the wisdom of God as displayed in creation and providence; and the New Testament exults in the variegated wisdom expressed in the nature and processes of redemption. Naturally our attention is more directly fixed on the spiritual aspects and aims of the divine government, but we can never forget that the intelligence that presides over that government is as unerring as its design is sublime.

Modern knowledge has given us no reason to doubt the perfection of creation, rather the contrary. The devout and famous men who lived before us were awed by the immensity of the universe, entranced by its loveliness, and amazed by its perfection. Said Balzac, looking over the landscape, 'Oh! that is true literature; there are no errors of style in a meadow.' 'Nothing can exceed the beauty of the country; it makes pictures appear sad trumpery,'

was the confession of Constable. And hundreds of naturalists have testified with Douglas Dewar 'Nothing shoddy is turned out in Nature's workshop. Even organs which will not be used but for an hour are finished with the utmost care. The May-fly, the winged life of which endures not a whole day, could not be more accurately constructed were it intended to last for a thousand years. The mollusc, that spends its whole life buried in the mud at the bottom of the ocean, secretes for itself a most beautiful shell.' It was a rare voice indeed that complained of Nature's shortcomings. But, say fifty years ago, it became quite the fashion with scientists to criticize and depreciate the structure and operations of the physical universe. In their eyes it seemed seriously at fault; they discovered, or thought that they did, irregularity, disharmony, defect, redundance, and failure. For a while it appeared as if this sinister interpretation of Nature was to be accepted by all clever observers for all time. Lately, however, the tone of criticism has quite changed, and the grand old doctrine of Nature's perfection once more holds the field. A distinguished scientist thus recently rebuked his censorious brethren: 'The tendency to assert that this or that character is useless, because the critic cannot find a use for it, is strongly to be deprecated. Every day naturalists are discovering the functions of the most insignificant-looking organs. *He would be a rash man indeed who would now assert that any part of the human body is useless.*'[1] So the latest science concludes with the psalmist, 'In wisdom hast Thou made them all' (civ. 24).

This, then, is the point we labour: if God's works,

[1] E. S. Goodrich, F.R.S., *The Evolution of Living Organisms*, p. 17.

despite all appearances to the contrary, are found, after severest examination, to be so exquisite, may we not reasonably expect one day to discover that, despite all appearances to the contrary, His ways are equally wise and good? How deeply humiliated is the student of Nature when, after pronouncing some character or other to be superfluous or injurious, he finds it to be of the essence of wisdom and beauty! And how deeply abased shall we be on the day when the secrets of God are made manifest, and it is seen that the providences we resented as untimely or harmful were exquisitely adjusted to our protection and perfecting! 'Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! a potsherd among the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest Thou? or Thy work, He hath no hands' (Isa. xlv. 9).

III. *The difficulty attending belief in the divine justice and goodness.* Here emerges the bitterest problem of life. It is sufficiently trying to suspect caprice in the ordering of things; the sense of intellectual inadequacy and failure in the world's government is distressing; but when events offend our moral sense, it is painful indeed. In spite of our conceit we are not altogether surprised that we cannot at once solve the intellectual difficulties which the universe suggests; but that brute force should prevail against right, duplicity against truth, and that innocence should be crushed by pride and truculence, threaten despair. The psalm before us loudly gives expression to this trouble. 'Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender

mercies?' These dark days overtake the best of men in every generation, and they bemoan themselves as they lose sight of justice and goodness in the tumult and darkness. 'I remember God, and am disquieted: I complain, and my spirit is overwhelmed.' 'Thy way was in the sea, and Thy paths in the great waters, and Thy footsteps were not known.'

Yet, even here, a little reflection may reassure us. That righteousness is the condition of the highest welfare of men and nations, and that God by strange instruments and terrible visitations brings this truth home to those in peril of moral corruption and ruin, are two great lessons enforced by revelation. Vesuvius is a lesser evil to prevent a greater; and tyrants, wars, and adversities may be overruled by heaven to saving moral issues. In the tenth chapter of the Book of Isaiah we learn how God used the Assyrians for disciplinary ends upon Israel, then again humbling them for their pride. 'Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets' (vv. 5, 6). 'Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks' (v. 12). In His sovereign wisdom and power the Supreme selects the scourge, and having wrought its purifying work it is broken in turn for its own cleansing.

Has not this method of arousing retrograde peoples, and stimulating them to a higher life, been followed

through the centuries? Writing of the thirteenth century, Douglas Carruthers observes: 'We in Europe scarcely realize the existence of the Mongols as a dominant factor in the world's history; it is difficult to believe that the Mongols once represented the greatest human force that Providence made use of to kindle the dying West into a new life. There is no doubt that such great movements, and the disturbances that follow in their wake, bring fresh vitality and stimulus to countries sinking into a condition of lethargy, as instanced by China and Europe in those days. Nature realizes the necessity of periodically purifying the old, stagnant nations; and her plan is generally the same, namely, by war.'[1] The forty-third and fifty-first chapters of Isaiah explicitly teach that a purer national life may be made possible through national disaster. In the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel our Lord foretells the appalling scenes and sufferings that will attend the development of His Kingdom. And, finally, the Book of the Revelation is crowded with awful imagery setting forth the world-tragedies amid which arises the City of God.

The divine judgements have a constructive as well as a destructive side, although the former is the more likely to be overlooked. Whilst much is destroyed and suffered, the inhabitants of the earth learn righteousness, and in this fact the severities of the divine government find their justification. That war arises out of the basest passions of our fallen nature, and that it is essentially one of the direst curses that can afflict those who delight in it, revelation never fails to teach; yet once more He who chastens us through our pleasant vices converts

[1] *Unknown Mongolia.*

our tragic sins into instruments of moral awakening and incitement. The sword has no less a diabolical signification because the Supreme from time to time uses it as a surgical instrument. And what is true in relation to the religious consequences of national calamity is equally true in relation to the overwhelming disasters which wreck individual prospects and appear so inexplicable.

In describing the rare but terrible cyclones which periodically sweep North Queensland, E. I. Banfield writes: 'Nature is rational even in her most passionate moments. These twenty-year-interval storms comb out superfluous leaves and branches, cut out dead wood, send to the ground decayed and weakly shoots, and scrub and cleanse trunks and branches of parasitic growths. All is done boldly, yet with such skill that in a few weeks losses are hidden under masses of clean, insectless, healthy, bright foliage. The soil has received a luxurious top-dressing. Trees and plants respond to the stimulus with magical vigour, for lazy, slumbering forces have been roused into efforts so splendid that the realism of tropical vegetation is to be appreciated only after Nature has swept and sweetened her garden.'[1] '*Nature is rational even in her most passionate moments.*' May we not believe that Providence is equally rational in those whirlwinds that sweep society, and which, whilst they occasion painful confusions, also cleanse, stimulate, and beautify the life of nations? If the naturalist discerns rationality in the cyclone, can we be far wrong in our recognition of an intelligent and a benign purpose controlling the tumult and fury of the people, and through discipline sweetening their life?

[1] *The Confessions of a Beachcomber.*

THE SHEPHERD OF THE SEA

The living God is Shepherd of the ocean as well as of the sweet sylvan mead ; He is present and watchful over His flock in the days of storm and darkness, as in the days of prosperity and peace. It is in the storm that the shepherd is best understood ; there specially does he reveal his strength and faithfulness and love. It is in the dark and dangerous crisis that we best prove the saving power of the Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. The grandeur of the Lord Jesus is never so impressive as when He had the storm for a background. Let us not fear when all that we hold dear is strewn in wreck. When the work and hope of years disappear in all-enfolding calamity, the Shepherd may be hidden, but He is there. 'Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom' (Luke xii. 32). He feeds and keeps amid foam and spray, as on green pastures and among the lilies. And in the hurricane that hurls the strength and glory of nations in the dust, the Shepherd still controls, remembering mercy in judgement. The trident is His crook. 'The floods have lifted up their voice ; the floods lift up their roaring. Above the voices of many waters, the mighty breakers of the sea, the Lord on high is mighty. Thy testimonies are very sure' (Ps. xciii. 3–5). Through all the uproar and shipwreck His 'testimonies,' His principles of truth and justice, His purpose of mercy and salvation, prevail. How full of anxiety, agitation, agony, is this seventy-seventh psalm ! How full of thoughts of mystery, terror, and almost despair, and yet with that sweet, unexpected verse for its ending ! 'Thou leddest Thy people like a flock.' In the very heart of the black tornado the green hills of millennial years are in view upon which at last the Shepherd shall feed His flock.

To-day we are confused by a fearful tempest such as the world has never seen before; yet we may be sure that in due season God will vindicate Himself and His ways. Mr. W. H. Hudson tells how he climbed a church tower that had a peal of eight big bells. The effect of the chimes was too awful for words. In less than three minutes it became unendurable. It was all terrible, shrieking, crashing, roaring, piercing the brain like a steel weapon, and it would have sent him out of his senses altogether if he had remained longer; yet at the distance the frightful discord resolved itself into mellow music. To-day we are in the heart of a confused, roaring, hideous world that might well drive us to madness and despair; yet let us wait a while, obedient, trustful, patient, and the alarming noises that now affright the air shall prove Sabbatic music calling the race to a higher and holier life. They who have got the due distance hear 'the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the ages' (Rev. xv. 3).

II

THE UNFAILING LIGHT

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path.—Ps. cxix. 105.

And we have the word of prophecy made more sure: whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place.—2 Pet. i. 19.

We mortals tread a dim and perilous way, and most of us feel the need of guidance in the highest and most solemn matters of life. We anticipate a realm in which the essential truths of being will shine forth without the possibility of being misunderstood. 'And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light' (Rev. xxii. 5). But this is in sharp contrast with out present condition. Ours is 'the night'; sin, sorrow, and death prevail, wrapping the world in darkness, rendering life mysterious, painful, perilous. We have sore need of whatever light is available. As Oliver Cromwell puts it: 'One beam in a dark place hath exceeding much refreshment in it.' The Scriptures claim to give the light that our situation demands, to be the 'lamp shining in a dark [or squalid] place,' furnishing an adequate solution of the painful problems which oppress us, 'the master light of all our seeing.'

In the Bible we believe that we possess the truest clue to our personality. 'Know thyself' is the first precept of philosophy, and in the sacred book we

best learn this secret. Here we attain to the knowledge of the spirituality of our nature, of our relation to the Father of spirits, and of our citizenship in the spiritual and abiding universe. Again, on the sacred page we receive the glad news of our redemption from sin and condemnation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here, too, we welcome the light that discovers the path of present duty. And, finally, in the foregleam of revelation we anticipate our destiny; so far as it has any practical significance, the mystery of the future is disclosed. We do not go to our Bible expecting it to furnish a key to the secret of the stars, or to the story of the earth, or to the treasures of Nature; but to consult it for what it really is, a directory of life. What the creature owes to the Creator, to himself, and to his brother; how he shall fulfil his obligations and attain the perfection fitting him for his destiny in the redemptive grace,—here is the burden of revelation, and they misunderstand and misuse it who seek in it what pertains to science and philosophy. 'Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established,' or 'ordered aright,' is the counsel of the wise; and the just response is that given by the psalmist, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path.' Very precious indeed in a life of perpetual anxiety like ours is the gracious light that shows where next we can set down our foot with safety.

On the present occasion we propose to confine our reflections to two aspects of the divine guidance vouchsafed in revelation—its trustworthiness and its indispensableness.

I. The *trustworthiness* of this golden lamp of the Church of God.

1. The trustworthiness of the *prophetic* word.

'The word of prophecy' is the Old Testament. The words of Moses, Isaiah, and all the prophets, are regarded as one and the same word, their entire testimony, and this St. Peter assumes is worthy of our absolute confidence. The Revised Version no longer describes the prophets as 'holy,' yet we know that such was their true character; in dealing with them we have not to do with men of uncertain reputation, but with men of profound sincerity and truthfulness, corresponding with their vocation, themselves burning and shining lights in dark generations. The purity and greatness of their character invite confidence in their message. And their message was divine. 'For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost.' The things they taught were not evolved out of their own consciousness, not views and imaginations of their own, it was not any illumination to which they had attained by human wisdom; their knowledge of God and of His will and purpose was due to the authentic, personal action of God Himself. 'They were moved by the Holy Spirit,' carried out of themselves, above and beyond themselves, penetrating to divine secrets outside the range of natural vision. 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts' (Isa. lv. 8, 9). Into that supernal realm were the great prophets exalted, learning the thoughts and ways of God, that they might make known to the nations the way of salvation.

Is there any reason to hesitate concerning this doctrine of inspiration? We freely admit the doctrine

so far as it relates to the intellectual world. A few elect souls possess extraordinary faculties of insight and expression. Victor Hugo writes, 'The production of minds is the secret of the abyss,' and it pleases the Supreme Spirit ever and anon to call forth spirits of rarest power and vision. We must remember that revelation recognizes the great poets, philosophers, and artists as being divinely inspired; and we have no other way to describe genius than to speak of Plato, Socrates, Virgil, Dante, Angelo, Shakespeare, and their peers as being inspired. And the greater the ordinary man may be, the more does he reverence these exceptional spirits. In speaking of Isaac Newton, and referring to what he thought defective in Newton's manner of reasoning, Edmund Burke adds in a parenthesis, 'If in so great a man it be not impious to discover anything like a blemish.'[1] Thus great men speak of the greatest. And we all do them singular homage, accepting them as lawgivers in the intellectual sphere, deferring to their lightest word.

Why, then, if we thus acknowledge the operation of the Spirit in the mental world, should we stumble at His corresponding action in the moral world? Whatever may be our need of supernatural assistance in respect to the temporal life, we need instruction and guidance far more in regard to our moral life and duty. Such light is given in the 'word of prophecy, whereunto, we "do" well that "we" take heed.' All who gave such heed have proved its verity and virtue. So far as the Jews have been loyal to the sacred book, it has secured to them unity and persistence through two thousand years, in spite of mighty injustice, persecution, and calamity. In his defence

[1] *Sublime and Beautiful.*

Stephen reminds his accusers of 'that Moses . . who received living oracles to give unto us.' That they were '*living*,' the national history amply proves. There is divinity in an oracle that has wrought the stupendous miracle. And just as multitudes have acknowledged the intellectual greatness of the supreme masters, and followed their guidance with thankfulness, so myriads have felt the spiritual truth and power of the prophetic word; they have proved it to be the word of salvation here and hereafter. Strong indeed are the words of our Lord, and yet entirely justified, 'And He said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead' (Luke xvi. 31).

2. Further, 'We have the word of prophecy made more sure.' That is, we have the confirmation of the Old Testament in the New. As Dr. George Adam Smith affirms: 'We do not exaggerate if we say that the Bible of the Jews in our Lord's time was practically our Old Testament. For us its supreme sanction is that which it received from Christ Himself. It was the Bible of His education and the Bible of His ministry. . . . We look to Christ as the chief Authority for our Old Testament.'[1] Whilst our Master, on a few points, used it with a certain discrimination, He found in it the prophecy of Himself and of His mission; by it His own life was nurtured, He quoted it with absolute confidence, and on every occasion enforced it as containing the words of eternal truth and life. Not on a single occasion, not for a moment, did He speak lightly or contemptuously of it, but invariably with confidence, sympathy, and reverence. Let us make Him our example in dealing with the Old Testament, and there will be

[1] *The Preaching of the Old Testament.*

no more flippant criticism of it. Neither let us attempt to weaken our Lord's sanction of the Bible, on which He set such store, by speaking of His earthly limitations, for in so doing we deny His essential glory and the basis of our hope. If Edmund Burke in alluding to Sir Isaac Newton was constrained to write apologetically, 'If in so great a man it be not impious to discover anything like a blemish,' shall we dare to suggest frailty in the majestic One in whom God speaks His final word to the race? Let us take the Old Testament reverently from the hand of the Master, with His solemn authentication; using it as He used it, for the knowledge of God, the strengthening of the soul, the ordering of life, and for the mighty hope that it implies and promises. What was good enough for the Redeemer is good enough for the redeemed.

Those who clamour for the severance of the two Testaments may rest assured that they plead for the impossible. Some complain that injustice is done to the Old by its being bound up with the New. 'The old Jewish Testament is of so grand a nature that there is nothing with which we can compare it in other literature. The New Testament, the book of "grace," appeals more to the heart of little souls. To have joined the New Testament to the Old, as the Bible, the Book of Books, is perhaps the greatest audacity that literary Europe can have on its conscience.'[1] Whilst, on the other hand, certain divines are troubled lest the claim of the New Testament should be prejudiced by its marriage with the Old. We may rest assured that this marriage was made in heaven. The Church of God, led by the Spirit of God, made no mistake in uniting the two,

[1] Nietzsche.

and what God has joined together no man can put asunder. The Old and the New Testaments are organically one, as the primaeval earth and the tertiary constitute one complete and harmonious globe. As the geological world through many mutations gradually reached more perfect types, dropping ruder forms, eliminating coarser life, until all became very beautiful and very good; so the redeeming purpose of God developed through much imperfection until in the fullness of time all the righteousness, faithfulness, and love of the Deity were revealed in the Messiah, and in His salvation; but the two dispensations are two stages of the one glorious drama. And as to-day we build our palaces with the marbles of the ancient world, enrich ourselves with its gold, diamonds, and precious stones, and draw from its depths fire and light, power and beauty, so from the documents of the ancient Church do we derive much of our best treasure for the enrichment of character, the enlightenment of our understanding, and for the direction of life.

We consider,

II. The *indispensableness* of this revelation. 'A lamp shining in a dark place.' We were born in the night; we have lived in darkness; we are not without stars and moons, but we have never yet seen the light of day, only the twilight. Hence the indispensability and preciousness of God's most holy word to guide our feet into the way of peace.

But it is objected that we have other sources of illumination making clear the path of life, and that these render us independent, increasingly independent, of any ancient book-revelation. In the recently published *Journals* of Emerson we find him complaining that preachers insisting on a great truth

are usually anxious to show how it corresponds with the life and teaching of Jesus, instead of showing how the life and teaching of Jesus corresponds with the truth. The truth of truths, Emerson contends, consists in the fact that truth is self-evident; you do not need great names to substantiate it. It is light, and there is no need of a candle by which to see the sun. 'Why must I obey Christ? Because God sent Him. But how do I know God sent Him? Because my own heart teaches the same thing He taught. Why, then, shall I not go to my own heart at first?'[1] But the patent fact is here overlooked that much remains latent in the mind and heart until some rare genius discerns and gives it expression. All mathematical relations existed before Euclid came, and all men had some knowledge of them; yet it remained for Euclid to establish the science, to define and demonstrate the truths it comprehends. Our intellect teaches the same thing that Euclid taught; had we gone to our own intellect first, we had been little the wiser. In all spheres thinkers of exceptional vision are necessary to put the multitude in possession of truths otherwise hidden from their eyes. A wealth of imagination and emotion existed in the human heart before Shakespeare came; yet it needed the great poet to discern and distinguish its workings and make them intelligible. He made of the mystery of the heart an open secret, but had we first gone to our own heart, the result would not have been encouraging.

If this reasoning be correct so far as it concerns the intellectual and emotional life, it is even more so in relation to the moral nature. After a Christian education and a ministerial period, it was easy for

[1] Vol. ii., p. 516.

Emerson to find in his own heart essential truths; but had he not first ploughed with the scriptural heifer, would he so readily have found out the riddle? Before the Christian age and outside the Christian zone, it was not found easy to come to the knowledge of the eternal truths; on the contrary, able and sincere seekers sorrowfully complained that they could not order their speech aright because of the darkness. The great spiritual truths are kindred to the human mind and heart, and the faculty to appreciate them is latent in all; but the anointed seers were indispensable to render the verities luminous and efficient. Prophetic spirits in Israel, and outside Israel, flashed upon the consciousness of the nations the truths by which we live; out of what was to the vast majority an otherwise impenetrable nebulousness, they caused to shine the stars by which we may safely sail this mysterious sea. Emerson strikingly confutes his own doctrine of simply consulting our own heart for the truth, for no sooner has he repudiated Moses, Isaiah, and our Lord, rarely mentioning them again, than he proceeds to sprinkle his pages thickly with the names and *dicta* of Homer, Plato, Plotinus, Shakespeare, Bacon, Goethe, and a multitude of minor stars. Having dispensed with Him who is 'the life and the light of men,' he reminds us of the Brazilians who after sunset read as best they may by the light of bottled fireflies.

It is very generally supposed that recent years have increased our knowledge outside revelation on the highest questions, whilst the fact is that rationalists themselves have lost confidence in several of the guiding lights which they once considered of first consequence.

1. The trust in *reason* upon which the old rationalists placed such emphasis has been rudely shaken by their modern successors. That the chief use of reason is to convince us of our ignorance seems the general conclusion of these moderns. Consider the following from Tyndall's *The Forms of Water*: 'It is worth pausing to think what wonderful work is going on in the atmosphere during the formation and descent of every snow-shower; what building power is brought into play; and how imperfect seem the productions of human minds and hands when compared with those formed by the blind forces of Nature! But who ventures to call the forces of Nature blind? In reality, when we speak thus we are describing our own condition. The blindness is ours; and what we really ought to say, and to confess, is that our powers are absolutely unable to comprehend either the origin or the end of the operations of Nature.'[1] So, according to our scientist, Nature is not blind; there is presumably a directive Spirit in the universe. The wheels are full of eyes; but *we* are blind and utterly incapable of comprehending the meaning of the earth; it is, indeed, presumption in us to attempt. And if the agnostic thus assumes our blindness in relation to the origin and end of the operations of Nature, he none the less insists on our blindness in respect to our own being and destiny. 'Everything in man is a mystery, and we can know nothing of what is not man. That is human knowledge!' Such is the finding of Anatole France. According to these philosophers, the painful limitations of the intellect forbid that we can ever expect to know the whence, the whither, or the way, and we must be content to remain in profound

[1] p. 31.

ignorance of what it most concerns us to know. If there is truth in this contention, a much-boasted light has waxed dim.

2. The confidence of our fathers that a close acquaintance with *Nature* would guide to right principles and ends has been seriously shaken. According to Adolf Wuttke, 'The essence of Chinese morality is an effortless conformance to an eternally changeless world-order.'[1] Morality is 'a mechanical adapting of self to universal Nature.' Believing this, and believing that the nearer people live to Nature the more they obey natural law, Rousseau sought to reverse civilization, and send us back to barbarism; the savage being supposed to live the ideal life of contentment and happiness, living as he does so much nearer Nature. A century ago how much pretty poetry and romance was written by the French in this strain! Yet the more austere naturalism of England was based on the same view; we were to drink in the spirit of Nature, closely to study and imitate her, and by her light we should be unerringly guided. How far is all this from the present way of interpreting Nature! One of the earlier naturalists writes: 'Singular, indeed, are the morals of flowers, and far from affording examples to be imitated by us. For in this respect to ensure success Nature uses every possible artifice, every sort of deceit, every kind of cruelty; and flowers offer innumerable instances of what might well be termed the most vicious propensities'[2] Later naturalists in a chorus join in this indictment of Nature, until Professor Huxley in his famous lecture, *Evolution and Ethics*, threw Nature overboard altogether as a standard of human

[1] *Christian Ethics*, vol. i., p. 44.
[2] Beccari, *The Great Forests of Borneo*.

duty. According to this leading expositor of the ethics of Nature, her guidance must not be accepted if we would reach a worthy goal. Her light leads astray. Her leading principle is no principle for us. Her process is repugnant to our higher instincts, fatal to our best interests, and, if we would escape damnation, we must at every step withstand her spirit and example. Here, then, another lauded lamp fails.

3. *Conscience* has long been reverenced, and consulted with confidence as an authoritative guide of life; most moralists have regarded it as in some sense a divine oracle whose judgements were dogmatic and obligatory. Conscience occupied the place in the moral sphere that the compass does in the natural. It was recognized as the supreme authority in the principal rationalistic systems of moral philosophy. But here again a crucial change has taken place in the estimate of the moral sense by many modern thinkers. When Nietzsche writes, 'The prick of conscience is as foolish as the bite of a dog on a stone. Conscience is not the voice of God, but of other men in the heart of man,'[1] he bluntly expresses the generally accepted opinion of the modern evolutionist. So far from the moral faculty being a golden heaven-lit lamp whose guiding ray may be implicitly followed, it turns out to be a greasy, smoky, battered old lantern, a relic of antiquity, to be used with suspicion. It can no longer be regarded as the trumpet of the eternal, but as a gramophone in which we hear the voices of men like ourselves, of a multitude inferior to ourselves—nay, too, of strange wild notes of an inhuman past. The golden candlestick of the Jewish temple is said to be buried in the mud

[1] Mügge, p. 157.

of the Tiber, and conscience at the hands of rationalism has suffered a similar degradation. So another standard light has gone; conscience is stripped of its divinity; an extinguisher has been put on what the old deism honoured as 'the candle of the Lord.'

4. The *instinctive* in human nature gives only a flickering light. It has been thought that as beasts and birds possess what is known as 'a sense of direction,' so humanity will be guided into truth by an analogous sense. Instinct is the impulse that has been evolved through ages under the pressure of actuality, and influential systems of modern philosophy trust more to its promptings in the conduct of human life than to the reasoned conclusion. Yet those most inclined to defer to the authority of instinct see reason to doubt it. Fabre in *Insect Life* has a chapter on 'The Science of Instinct,' in which he shows with what transcendent art insects act when guided by the unconscious inspiration of instinct. But in the following chapter on 'The Ignorance of Instinct' he shows that a strange contradiction is characteristic of the instinctive faculties, and that with deep science is associated ignorance not less deep. Fabre's conclusion on the whole matter is most instructive: 'Instinct knows everything in the unchanging paths laid out for it; beyond them it is entirely ignorant. The sublime inspirations of science, the astonishing inconsistencies of stupidity, are both its portion, according as the creature acts under normal conditions or under accidental ones.' We might well feel insecure in a life as full of strange situations as ours when the faculty on which our safety depends is liable to such serious aberrations; for it must be assumed that the errancy noted on the lower ranges of life will be

repeated on the higher. So it would seem that another trusted lamp in the temple of Nature burns but dimly, if, practically, it does not wholly fail.

Let it, however, be distinctly understood that the believer in revelation is under no obligation to depreciate the natural sources of illumination, or to agree with these criticisms of them. Reason is not so blind as pictured; for if the forces of Nature are not blind, neither are we who are a part of Nature; if there is a supernatural element in Nature, which Tyndall allows, we by an inborn sense discern the supernatural working, and everywhere the Scriptures do homage to that sense. Neither does revelation set at naught the light of Nature, but allows that it is sufficient to see God by, and to render authoritative the main fundamental moral truths. Whether or not the conscience is a gramophone charged only with human voices, the noblest rationalists have heard in it the trumpet Moses heard on Sinai; whilst the instincts and intuitions of the soul are constantly appealed to by revelation and incited to action. The truth is that justice must be done to all these organs. Each has its place and function, and a serious error is made when any one of them is unduly depreciated. Only the point we make here is that no one of these, nor all of them combined, avails to meet the fullness of our need; large room is left for further illumination.

Whatever may be the value of natural signals and internal illumination amid the perplexities and perils of life, all impartial minds must acknowledge the unique advantage of revelation. Sin, selfishness, passion, and irregularities of life have destroyed the integrity of our nature, rendering largely unavailing all native lights; extraordinary guidance is imperative

if we are to find and walk in the path of life. The Old Testament, with its records of the law and government of God, interpreted by elect souls greatly gifted with spiritual insight, sheds marvellous light on the mystery of life and the way everlasting. The New Testament renders that light more marvellous still. The supreme Teacher of the ages opens His lips, and the obstinate problems are set in a confident and rejoicing light. The Angel standing in the sun is a dim metaphor of incarnate Truth and Love standing on the earth, making clear the dark enigmas which for ages had tortured our intellect and conscience. 'God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son' (Heb. i. 2). 'Again therefore Jesus spake unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life' (John viii. 12).

We may be reminded that of late years revelation has suffered at the hands of criticism equally with the moral faculty and natural theology. Our reply to that is that many accredited scholars who have subjected revelation to severest criticism retain their hold of it faster than ever; they are satisfied that they have only taken the thief out of the candle, and henceforth walk in a purer light. As for the criticism that reviles and rejects revelation altogether, we turn from it to the unsophisticated million who in the fierce struggle of life prove the reality and preciousness of their Bible. Our attention is unduly fixed on those who in literature dispute revelation, and we forget the myriads of the sincere who in temptation, difficulty, and sorrow, in the stern strife of life and the blinding mystery of death and the grave, find in it assurance and peace, their strength, shield, and utmost

salvation. We should, indeed, be forlorn without it. A while ago the object-glass of one of America's largest telescopes was stolen. Tremendous theft, it was like making off with the sky and stars! But who shall measure the catastrophe were one to filch away the Bible, that grandest glass of all that reveals the glory of the firmament of the soul? The eternal truths would abide, our faculty of vision in some degree remain; but how many of the great lights would be lost, how many more wax dim, and how nebulous and uncertain would become all our knowledge of the highest things!

III

THE VICTORY OF PATIENCE

And it came to pass, at the return of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle.—2 SAM. xi. 1.

Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain.—JAS. v. 7.

Two ways are open to us by which to realize the world; the one false and disappointing, the other legitimate and successful. The false method is expressed in our first text—the method of haste, violence, lawlessness; the true method is described in the second, that of patience, industry, and virtue. 'When kings go out to battle,' they invade a country with the design of suddenly grasping power, seizing treasure, and covering themselves with glory, apart from all moral considerations; believing that the world is for the strong, they conclude that if they are only strong enough, prompt enough, subtle enough, they may appropriate whatever they covet. When the husbandman sets forth to realize his ambition, he is guided by a wiser programme; by industry, discipline, and patience he strives to secure the wealth of the earth, which is at last the wealth of nations.

The quality of the contrasted methods is manifested in their respective consequences. Kings go out to battle 'at the return of the year'—that is, in the Spring, when Nature, awakening from her winter sleep is arrayed in freshened splendour, when the flowers appear in the earth, the music of the bird

is heard, and the sweet sunshine rejoices all hearts. As to the aspect of things when they return from battle, the ghastly fields of Belgium and Northern France testify ; and those desolate districts represent the working and issues of the policy of violence wherever it is tried. On the other hand, the husbandman, allured by the shower and rainbow, goes forth with plough and seed-basket, spade and scythe, to realize the potential opulence,

> To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
> And read his history in a nation's eyes :

the symbol of the working and outcome of patient virtue in all spheres. As Henry Naegely writes, ' If we cast a glance over the pages of history, we may note that the monarch, the statesman, the financier, and the philosopher continually contrive to bring the world to the verge of ruin, and that it is only saved from utter destruction by the peasant's blood, by his hard-won earnings, and his patient toil. Is not that the story of the nations in a few words ? '[1]

It must, however, be confessed that the Christian beatitude, ' Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth,' does not commend itself to the acceptance of the natural man. Violence appeals more powerfully to the imagination and passions, and all generations have felt the seductiveness of its glamour. The most advanced civilizations have stained their glory by the practice and praise of infernal methods of violence. Despite its manifest irrationality, injustice, and cruelty, war readily awakens the enthusiasm of nations. The

[1] *J. F. Millet and Rustic Art.*

very refinement of a people seems to intensify its spirit of truculence. A pathetic African proverb reveals this singular fact, 'The war drum has no ornament'; so it would seem that the dire nature of warfare is more frankly recognized by the barbarian than by the civilized, who disguise the horror by a profusion of ornaments, material and literary. And not in international strife only, but in all spheres, violence is apt to assume a commanding aspect beyond that of patient right and unoffending merit. To seize suddenly a prize, to assert a mastery, to gratify a hungry ambition for gold, power, or indulgence without the fatigues and delays of honest endeavour is an enchanting temptation that human nature in all ages has found difficult to resist.

Too often philosophy is ready to second sinister ambitions, to justify them with reasonings that deny reason. Very able writers are at this moment bent on convincing us of the essential utility of the various vices. 'Without wickedness people would be unable to display their good qualities'; 'It is impossible to imagine beings possessing at the same time goodness and beatitude'; 'Liberty could not exist in a world where servitude did not exist.' We ought, therefore, to regard with tenderness the vices and the misery they involve, seeing that in their absence 'we should be condemned to a perpetual moral mediocrity.'[1] With a parity of reasoning we might infer the greatness of our debt to fever, cancer, leprosy, and similar diseases for the maintenance of the general health; and for the future, instead of regarding the lazar-house as a sink of physical corruption, respect it as a spring of public sanity. To say that in the present order of things disease and

[1] Anatole France, *Life and Letters.*

3830

vice are possible is far from allowing that their actuality is essential to the continuance of health and virtue. Yet such is the contention, that without the reality of evil the blessings of soundness and goodness are impossible.

There is also a philosophy that finds war and various other forms of violence necessary if the heroic qualities of human nature are to continue. In his *Journals* Emerson asks, 'What is the meaning of this invincible respect for war, here in the triumphs of our commercial civilization, that we can never quite smother the trumpet and the drum? How is it that the sword runs away with all the fame from the spade and the wheel? Why, but because courage never loses its high price?' In our own immediate age the theory of the indispensability of violence to the conservation of a vigorous virtue has been asserted by an abnormal genius with brutal frankness, whilst a great nation thankfully accepted this justification of their worship of the sword, and provoked the bloodiest war the world has ever seen.

In defiance of this perversity our deepest nature never ceases to protest against the violence which fills the earth with sorrow. That courage is only nourished by carnage, and that without its miseries the sublimities of life cannot be reached is a doctrine that outrages our profoundest instinct; and this condemnation applies not only to war but also to violence in all its forms and manifestations. Passion may obscure the instinct, but no sophistry can destroy it. 'And it came to pass, at the return of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle.' What a sharp and tragic antithesis! We employ the very season when God reveals Himself in our midst, moving us to wonder and gratitude by a thousand splendid

gifts, in destroying His gifts and one another. The spring brings a revised edition of a big Bible, written in gold, purple, and azure, bearing fresh witness to the glory of the Creator and telling again of His goodwill to men; and this is the season we choose in which to display our darkest passions in mutual slaughter. When spring and war meet, heaven and hell meet; when spring and war are reconciled, heaven and hell will kiss each other. The universe cannot supply two pictures in sharper contrast; and when we see the wrath of man turning God's field of the cloth of gold into a crimson panorama, we instinctively feel that war and all violence is no part of the constitution of things, but a disharmony, a mystery of iniquity contrary to the divine character, law, and purpose. Revelation amply confirms the inborn conviction.

The Church of Christ has no reason to be ashamed of the mild maxims of its Master. Abundant evidence is at hand that the methods of violence in all spheres result in failure.

1. In the *imperial* realm, where violence has so largely prevailed, its futility is conspicuously manifest. 'History has already compelled the question why imperial races rather than their conquered subjects have ultimately degenerated—why it is that nothing *fails* like success.'[1] Is not the answer to this question found in the fact that these imperial races achieved success by conquest—that is, through violence—rather than by the patient processes of legitimate progress and possession? The ability to retain a possession once acquired is largely the result of the discipline involved in the act of its acquisition; and when such discipline for any reason is lacking, the retention of the property in question becomes

[1] Simpson, *The Spiritual Interpretation of Nature.*

precarious. It has been well said, 'It is only a sudden success that dazzles. Long waiting nearly always ensures a wise possession.' How often do we see when a great or wealthy man who has risen from the ranks passes away, bequeathing to his sons a splendid name or fortune, that the name is forthwith tarnished and the fortune dissipated! The explanation is that the solid qualities of knowledge, judgement, and self-control necessary for the retention of the estate, as they were necessary for its acquisition, are wanting in the undisciplined heirs. Has it not been much the same with the great empires and their conquests that pass before us in history? By brute force these military nations grasped and exploited the territory of their neighbours, consuming it upon their lusts; and the process of dissolution began with the conquest, for an abiding empire is only possible when built up in the spirit of equity and moderation. As expressed by James Russell Lowell: 'All history shows the poverty and weakness of Force, the wealth and power of Gentleness and Love.' Its teaching is that empire-builders must remember that 'pride and violence dig their own grave,' and that therefore justice and patience must order their doings.

The devil leads those in whom he would awaken ambition up a high mountain to show them the kingdoms of the world and their glory; but whatever he handles he deflowers. The glory attained by falsehood and inhumanity changes to darkness, and the system of tyranny they create and bolster, sooner or later comes to naught. Is not the history of our Lord's temptation most suggestive as to the hollowness and fugitiveness of the promises of evil? 'And the devil led Him up, and showed Him all the kingdoms

of the world *in a moment of time'* (Luke iv. 5). That is precisely the measure of the duration allotted to his mirages. Power, glory, or gaiety captured by illicit methods of fraud and violence have no large horizon or enduring life ; but are seen in a moment, bounded by the moment, and are no sooner seen than gone. The vision that Bismarck saw was of this order ; the whole operation belonged to the realm of magic, no relic of the grandiloquent fabric being left. Is it not at last becoming clear to thinking men that the reality and permanence of government are attained only by fairness, justice, mildness, mercifulness, patience, and magnanimity ?

The Times newspaper not long ago contained an article on 'The Law of Success' which proceeded thus : 'Christian Imperialism is secured by the quiet dominance of the meek. There is no place for arrogance in the Empire of the Spirit. Fellowship is its law, whilst its boundaries are as wide as human life. Its spirit is the spirit of meekness—at once active and patient. Its self-sacrifice is the measure of its power. Those who would live worthy of this imperial power must be animated by a passionate devotion to the will of God and the service of man. They will recognize that they are important only in proportion as they learn to serve. In the quiet resolution of faith they will proceed to tasks which daunt the most courageous of this world's reformers, and thus demonstrate the paradox of true success.' Is it not truly remarkable that one of the great leading secular newspapers of the world should publish an article written in this spirit, advocating the principles of the Sermon on the Mount ? Verily it is an unmistakable sign that civilization has moved far in the right direction.

Cincinnatus showed a true patriotic instinct in his return to the plough, for in the spirit of the husbandman—that is, in the temper of honest and useful industry, of modest and sober living, of simple enjoyment and confident waiting—is the enduring civilization evolved ; whilst the lawlessness and riot of the men who delight in war only blight and destroy.

2. In the whole range of the *social* sphere the ploughman with his dull instruments prevails as against the warrior in shining armour ; in other words, the policy of justice, tolerance, and brotherhood works to far happier issues than that of a brutal or refined selfishness. Scientists have for long past been accustomed to dwell on the combativeness and ruthlessness of Nature ; and writers on social economy have been ready to conclude that the social organism was framed on the same model, and controlled by the same law. They have written largely and eloquently on the identity of the two systems, contending for the inevitableness of intensely selfish, truculent competition in all social relations. It comes, therefore, as a welcome relief to learn that Nature has another and a more gracious expression. A close observer like J. H. Fabre bears this testimony : 'Never, I say never, do we find among bees and wasps an idler, assiduously planning the conquest of his neighbour's possessions. No insect is a parasite on its own species'[1] And Ray Lankester declares that to affirm that aggressive war is the basis of all healthy development is an absurd and a pernicious proposition, and he absolutely denies the assumption that warfare, or anything resembling it, is universal among living creatures. That the path of progress lies through the 'bloody

[1] *The Mason Bees.*

meadow ' is a heresy in science as well as a crime in religion. That a blind, brutal egotism is neither the law of the material nor of the social realm is a conclusion on which leading thinkers are more nearly agreed than ever.

In human society, unhappily, the individual member too often becomes a parasite on his own species, craftily and forcibly living at his neighbour's expense; but wherever the misalliance exists it is at the cost of both parties. The legislation that favours the strong, the clever, or the opulent, as against the mass, and governs in the spirit of a military ascendancy, eventually provokes another form of violence, such as Peterloo Massacres, French Revolutions, American Civil Wars, and Russian Bolshevism. Trade conducted in the temper of troops looting a city does not in the end advantage any party concerned. Sharp practice, extortion, undue pressure, the spoiling of the other, fierce greed and its cruelties never yield the prosperity they promise. St. James paints a lurid battle-piece (v. 1–6) in which the selfish rich ride triumphantly over the trampled labourers, only to provoke a tragic doom. In our day the trampled worker is in the ascendancy, and, organizing himself on the basis of war, threatens reprisal. It will be well for him to remember the lesson of his past history, that power does not imply right, and that the ultimate conquest rests with fairness, reasonableness, ability, honour. They that take the sword perish by the sword, whether wielded by the hand of the man with a gold ring, or by the horny hand of Labour.

More fully than ever before are the words of the apostle being understood and appreciated: ' Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not

consumed one of another' (Gal. v. 14, 15). The better statesmanship is seen to be that which does not aim to serve the nation by secret and selfish diplomacy, but by honourable compacts which will bear the light. The more intelligent leaders in the interests of both Capital and Labour are feeling after a modus that will make the machine work more smoothly through a more equal justice. Tradesmen have less faith in the efficacy of gladiatorial competition, and are increasingly willing to try the more pacific co-operation. The bandit, the bully, the burglar, the pirate, in all spheres, whatever uniform he may adopt, and whatever strategy he may follow, is more discredited than ever, and has less chance of success. The genius of husbandry—moderation, gentleness, patience, and a great trust in the faithfulness of Nature to requite honest merit—replaces the dark genius of the freebooter, truculent strength, and cunning.

Whilst so much has been written by naturalists concerning the selfish ferocity of vegetation, it is refreshing to get an authoritative testimony to another effect. James Rodway, in describing the Guiana forest, observes: 'The orchids never fight, either among themselves or with other plants. Perhaps one of the reasons why they have been successful in life is their retiring, unaggressive nature. Nevertheless they have overcome difficulties before which other plants were obliged to give way.' How suggestive that in the tropical forest, where the struggle for air and sun is most intense, the least aggressive flower survives, overcomes difficulties before which militant plants succumb, and attains to a glory beyond them all! The moral ought not to be missed by civilized man!

3. In the *personal* life it will prove a happier choice to imitate the plodding ploughman rather than to emulate the soldier of fortune. The swift, glittering, strategic career is, of course, far more alluring; but the modest, lawful method in the end brings most gain and glory. The fact is that violence—that is, force without reason, self-will without justice, subtlety without truth—never really succeeds in any pursuit. Clutching at gold, grabbing property, manœuvring for position, often secure ephemeral advantage; but sooner or later a mysterious law asserts itself and adjudges the crown to those who have played the game. Intellectual men sometimes attempt to force popularity by resorting to wine and opium, thus snatching dazzling effects they could not attain by sober effort; but the great masters of colour, eloquence, and song did not become immortal by such false expedients; and immoral audacity wins no enduring prize in any calling. The lust of pleasure proves a mockery. Seized by self-will and relished in abandon, the delights of life become insipid, as fruits whose ripening has been hastened by electricity are said to lack the flavours which alone make them worth having. Whatever the coveted thing may be that is obtained and used lawlessly, it repeats the fable of the rash boy with his crushed butterfly. The type of true success, of the felicity that will bear thinking about, is the wholesome, diligent, orderly, useful life of the peasant who makes of the earth a garden and keeps it blooming through the ages. 'To them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption, eternal life' (Rom. ii. 7).

Let us not suppose that the programme of peaceful endeavour argues any defect of character, or infirmity of purpose. On the contrary, perseverance

in such a life is only possible to men of strength, resolution, and utmost heroism. As Alfred Stevens, the French artist and critic, reminds his brethren, 'Violence is not vigour.' Violence betrays the consciousness of weakness, the defect of vigour, not in art only, but in regard to all callings, aspirations, and efforts. The bravery of the ideal husbandman is not less than that of the happy warrior; indeed, the rustic conqueror is the happy warrior of bloodless fields. The strength of the mild and passive virtues is as the strength of ten, for such virtues were the special glory of the strong Son of God. 'The kingdom and patience which are in Jesus' (Rev. i. 9) describes the true and eternal ideal.

IV

THE PERSONAL EQUATION IN CHRISTIAN BELIEF

If after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what doth it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. Be not deceived: Evil company doth corrupt good manners. Awake up righteously, and sin not; for some have no knowledge of God: I speak this to move you to shame.—1 Cor. xv. 32–34.

In this famous chapter St. Paul argues for the persistence of life, vindicating the doctrines of resurrection and immortality, basing his reasoning on the resurrection of our Lord. 'If it is with but mortal hopes and aims that I have battled, like some gladiator, with veritable wild beasts here in Ephesus, what is the good of it all? If dead men rise never, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. Ah, but, in real truth Messiah *has* been raised from the dead! and (since one resurrection disproves the impossibility) He is the first sheaf of a great harvest.'[1] Such is the contention of the apostle. Our text, however, seems to be an interruption to the great argument, and at the first glance it appears somewhat irrelevant and misplaced. Yet a little reflection shows that it is a parenthesis quite in place, and one of weightiest signification. The apostle reminds his readers that faith in the great future is not simply a question of logic, but also a question of the state of mind we bring to the consideration of the subject. He emphatically declares that it is possible for men so to live that their vision may be blurred, their sensibilities dulled, and they themselves become

[1] A. S. Way.

incapable of great ideals and hopes. To appreciate the apostle's position, let us note :

I. The Influence on Religious Belief of Personal Temperament, Atmosphere, and Association —We may say that none of our beliefs are determined by pure reason, but in every case are affected more or less by various extraneous factors, often entirely unsuspected ; and this is specially true in regard to religious beliefs.

1. *Personal bias may hinder appreciation of great truths.* That our convictions and sentiments influence our action is manifestly the case ; but it is equally indisputable that our mode of life reacts upon the mind and colours our reasoning. It is simple illusion to suppose that bare logic is all that is concerned in the formation of our opinions, whether philosophical, political, or religious. The pressure of personality subtly deflects the logical process. As Professor J. A. Thomson puts it, ' The scientific worker is well aware that in measurements and observations the accuracy attainable is only approximate, and that the degree of approximation varies with the individual. The personal equation has been for a long time frankly recognized and allowed for in astronomy ; it is also sometimes estimated in chemistry and physics ; but it must be recognized all round.'[1] The International Bureau of weights and measures at Sèvres possesses a precision balance of extraordinary sensitiveness ; the oscillations are observed through a telescope, and to guard against perturbations due to the warmth of the operator's body he is required to stand twenty feet away from the instrument. Whenever we reason, we ought first of all to be careful that we stand twenty feet away from ourselves, for some such personal

[1] *Introduction to Science.*

detachment is essential to a just conclusion. If the heat of the body will derange the mechanism of science, what will not the heat of mind and temper do when allowed to disturb the more delicately poised scales of intellectual and spiritual judgement? Our personal qualities, our sympathies and antipathies, our interests and ambitions, bias us one way or another, and materially affect the verdict we find. Whilst we fancy that we advance in argument by measured logical steps to the goal of truth, our personality dogs us all the way, and we finish pretty nearly where we began, with the goal of truth, it may be, quite out of sight.

In this fact we discern a justification of the apostle's position. These erring members of the Corinthian Church had suffered their mind to be corrupted through intimacy with the godless society from which they ought resolutely to have severed themselves; their gratuitous fellowship with sceptical, scoffing, sensual companions had debauched their personality. In another place St. Paul affirms, 'To the pure all things are pure: but to them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but both their mind and their conscience are defiled' (Titus i. 15). The converts whom the apostle now rebukes had allowed themselves to become thus depraved, and they were no longer competent to judge impartially a spiritual question, or to hold firmly the splendid ideals and hopes of the Christian faith. Their attitude to its singularly sublime doctrines was no longer sympathetic and responsive, but suspicious, critical, resistant. When the 'personal equation' is strong and adverse, it makes sad havoc with logic, especially where religious truth is concerned that demands the utmost sincerity and purity of purpose in those to whom it appeals.

Astronomers suffer much from the inaccuracy of the images viewed in their telescopes in consequence of the disturbances in the atmosphere, common even in clear weather. Hence observatories have been established at stations where the atmosphere is calm and little disturbed by currents. But on investigation Professor Langley, of Washington, discovered that a good deal of the perturbation of telescopic images arises from currents *within the telescope itself*. The first important matter, therefore, if the astronomer would see clearly, is that he wholly eliminate the disturbance within the tube itself. Living as we do in a world where there is so much outside us to mar our spiritual vision, the first and essential thing is nevertheless that we free ourselves from the disturbing currents within—the moods, tempers, and sympathies which vex and falsely bias the soul.

2. *Obscuring and falsifying mediums may prevent the apprehension of the truth.* To obtain a correct view of any subject whatever it is necessary that we secure a right standpoint and a medium that will neither distract nor distort. The mathematician, artist, or philosopher selects an environment that agrees with his special pursuit, and this at least is equally necessary in regard to the highest truth. We have just noted how desirable it is that the astronomer first purge his tube of all disturbing *media*; but, having done this, it is still important that he should, as far as possible, secure a clear, calm neighbourhood for his celestial observations, for, seen through a turbid atmosphere, he can hope to get only a blurred image of the orbs of glory. So, if we would gain a just view of the heaven of heavens and study its stars of light to saving advantage, we must, as far as that is practicable, choose a harmonious environment and atmosphere. Lovers

of pleasure must not expect a clear sight of the City of God through the mirages of Vanity Fair. Demas cannot 'see afar off' while blinded by dust-clouds of worldliness. And the eternal stars are no longer visible through the reek of Dives' orgies. To behold with open vision the glory, and to feel the solemn obligation of spiritual truth, we must ascend Mount Zion, beautiful for situation; in other words, frequent the sanctuary, improve Sabbatic hours, ponder the sacred page, cultivate saintly friendship and fellowship, indulge in serious thought, and give a sympathetic hearing to devout literature. In requiring a corresponding environment for its contemplation, religion asks for no more than all serious pursuits demand.

Here, then, we become acquainted with another ground for St. Paul's censure. In consequence of surrendering themselves to equivocal company and breathing a tainted air, these imperilled brethren were in danger of becoming blind to essential truths and the saving hope. The sanctuary was being neglected for the theatre, sacraments were giving place to wine and roses, the fellowship of saints forsaken for the society of sceptics and mockers. They were once more giving the pagan elements dangerous opportunity; the murky, muddy, mephitic air was closing in upon them, and day by day the majestic realities of the heavenlies were becoming more dim and doubtful.

3. *Unsympathetic society may make it difficult, and in the end perhaps impossible, to appreciate the highest truth.* In his advice to painters, Leonardo da Vinci writes thus: 'The painter requires severance from companions who are not in sympathy with his studies. His companions should resemble him in a taste for these studies; and if he fail to find any such, he should accustom himself to be alone. If you must have

companionship, choose it from your studio. All other companionship may prove extremely harmful.' So intolerant is art: lest the thought of the artist should be distracted to foreign objects, his time for practice restricted, or his enthusiasm abated, he must confine himself to studios, live with artists, consort with them only. There is nothing, therefore, that is singular or unreasonable in the insistence with which Christian teachers demand the severance of the spiritual from a carnal generation. To a certain extent they must of necessity dwell together; but intimate voluntary friendship is a peril which the godly must shun. If a cube of lead be placed on a cube of gold, the two metals slowly but inevitably begin to penetrate each other; thus assuredly do we tend to imbibe the spirit, to share the opinions, to partake of the qualities, of our intimate associates: only in this case we may fear that the lead is more likely to debase the gold than the gold is to enrich the lead. So, of old, the righteous renounced partnership with those whose lives were moulded on opposite principles. 'Depart from me, ye evil-doers, that I may keep the commandments of my God' (Ps. cxix. 115). And if we would retain our hold upon a great creed we must again protest with the psalmist, 'I hate the congregation of evil-doers, and will not sit with the wicked' (xxvi. 5).

> Therefore 'tis meet
> That noble minds keep ever with their likes,
> For who so firm that cannot be seduced?

Here, once again, we find justification for the apostolic admonition. The front of the offending of these doubtful brethren was their free intercourse with their pagan neighbours. Despite repeated apostolic warnings that they should abstain from idolatrous and

immoral society, that they should come out from among them and be separate, touching no unclean thing; they continued to mix with the heathen, frequenting their haunts, listening to their talk, partaking in amphitheatre, carnival, and banquet of their impure pleasures.

Never was it more necessary than at the present hour to recall the apostle's solemn warning. It is now popularly assumed that religious questions are settled by argument, and that good men and bad are equally competent for their decision. Without any reference to character people presume themselves entirely qualified to debate and decide the most solemn questions of life and destiny. No matter what their character, history, or habits, they consider themselves entitled to pronounce with absolute assurance on the highest themes—God, Christ, the atonement, the resurrection, immortality. 'Not so,' responds the apostle; 'great beliefs are not arrived at by reasoning, but rather do men live themselves into such beliefs, or live themselves out of them.' We may confidently affirm that it is possible so to live that it is easy to believe grand truths, natural to believe them, inevitable and delightful to believe them; or it is possible so to live that such truths appear increasingly incredible until finally it is impossible to accept them at all: one by one the eternal lights vanish, and nothing remains but atheism, pessimism, despair. 'Be not deceived.' 'Evil associations' work insidiously, deceivingly, yet in the end they stultify the soul, put out its eyes, destroy its sensibilities, lure it to the abyss; none are clever enough, strong enough, good enough, to withstand their seductive power.

Are any of us entangled by the associations which the apostle deprecates? Are they giving us a secret bias against godly doctrine, partially eclipsing the

solar truths, gradually reconciling us to unwholesome places and pleasures? If it be so, or before it be so, let us cut ourselves free from the dangerous alliance; abruptly, by the grace of God, and at any cost let us deliver our soul. The Government is building a new magnetic observatory in a lonely pastoral district in Scotland, remote from all railways, because the present institution at Kew has become unsatisfactory owing to the proximity of electric lines; the delicate instruments, instead of registering cosmical movements, have taken to record the movements of the trams. The observatory has been removed from the disturbed area, and placed beyond all interfering surroundings. Has our environment become dangerous to our spiritual life, confusing our thought, numbing our conscience, sapping our will? If so, let us, in the power of the Spirit, forthwith renounce the situation with its temptations. So shall the grace of God have free course, saving us to the uttermost.

II. The Perils Besetting Religious Faith Against which we have Special Need to Watch.

1. We cannot acquire or retain a great faith *whilst living in unrighteousness*. The pagans courted by these hesitating brethren were often intellectual and eloquent, and no doubt made telling speeches against the new doctrines of resurrection and immortality; but the apostle reminds his readers that the appreciation of these doctrines is not a matter of cleverness, but of righteousness. 'Awake to righteousness, and sin not.' 'Start from this drugged slumber with a righteous resolve.' That is, only righteous men, men purposing to live holily, can see this kingdom of God and enter it. The history of the classic nations sufficiently demonstrates the blinding power of

unrighteousness. The conception of the Deity underwent terrible degradation. They 'changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things' (Rom. i. 23). And the conception of humanity was similarly debased. 'If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die'—was the call of one of their great poets. When men are willing to live like animals they soon adopt an animal's catechism. As the same apostle writes elsewhere concerning the lawless, they 'hold down the truth in unrighteousness' (Rom. i. 18): as unbelief tends to irregularity of life, so looseness of living increases the blind spot to total blindness of mind and heart. Thus the apostle warns the backsliding brotherhood of Corinth that commerce with the ungodly is tending to injure their conscience, to tarnish their character, and of necessary consequence, to make it increasingly difficult for them to hold their transcendent faith.

How glaringly false is the assumption that we arrive at larger knowledge, true wisdom, and clearer vision of higher things, only as we pass through stages of licence! The sky may sometimes be reflected in a puddle, but woe to him who attempts to reach the stars that way! Only along the line of sincere purpose and strict morality may we hope to reach a saving knowledge of the truth. The warning words of Victor Hugo are worthy to be written in letters of gold, 'Let us never forget that the highest is only attained through the high.' He who would hold a creed worth holding must follow the path strewn with the white flowers of chastity, honesty, sobriety, faithfulness, practising the best that he knows. Great beliefs are not reached through

pleasant bouts of dialectical skirmishing, but through expensive experience in practical renunciation, endeavour, and sacrifice.

Do I now address any who are not without aspirations, but who as yet have not been able to receive the sublime articles of faith which St. Paul learned from his Master, and which in life and death are the inspiration and strength of the saints? To these let me say, Seek for this treasure of the soul in a virtuous life. Whilst aspiring after a vision of the things unseen and eternal, keep close to the law of righteousness; practise whatever is pure, temperate, true, and honourable, for these virtues are close kindred to the heavenly, and they are the sure stepping-stones to those shining table-lands to which our God Himself is moon and sun. None shall walk thus conscientiously, frequenting holy places, consorting with good and godly men, patiently waiting, hoping, praying, but the Spirit of truth and holiness shall lead him into the light.

2. High spiritual beliefs are impossible whilst we live *the sensual life.* St. Paul tells these wavering disciples that it is impossible for the high and spiritual thought of the resurrection and the resurrection life to exist in the heated atmosphere of Epicureanism. The Christian ideal must be nurtured in a brighter and purer air. 'Do not,' he says, 'go on deceiving yourselves. Do not continue in that fatal mistake of expecting to live the old sensual life and still to keep your souls pure and your hope of the resurrection bright and open. Pagan companionships, words, and ideals corrupt and lower the higher life, which you have learnt to live in Christ.'[1] In his letter to Titus the apostle states the matter most forcibly,

[1] Carr, *Horæ Biblicæ.*

'For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ' (ii. 11–13). There is no 'looking for the blessed hope' except the soul is kept clear by abstinence, purity, and discipline. The lust of the flesh always dims the spiritual vision, and sometimes blinds the eyes of the heart. Indulgent living is the foe of high thinking, especially the highest; turbid atmospheres quench the heavenly light; a pampered body denies the resurrection body; a putrid air stifles the divine life of the soul.

Neither is it necessary that we go to 'excess of riot' to bring about the darkness of the inward eye. Men of a certain temperament and culture who are bent on a pleasant life may have discretion and strength to keep indulgence within safe limits. Without any high motive they seek to regulate their pleasures by the aesthetic sense; form, taste, propriety, elegance, determine and control their gaieties. The appetites and their gratification are ruled by prudence. A while ago our scientists were experimenting with or about 'hot ice'; this paradoxical product represents the epicurean who combines animal heat with a cool judgement, and never exceeds moderation. They are the successors of the Preacher who was king over Israel in Jerusalem: 'So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me' (Eccles. ii. 9). Yet these wise voluptuaries are the most sceptical of all; none so blind as the perfect. However ethereally sensuality comports itself, it perverts the organs of

our highest nature and shuts out the vision and powers of the highest world.

Sir Hall Caine writes of Dante Gabriel Rossetti that 'he was not an atheist, but an unbeliever. In face of death his attitude was one of waiting; he did not know.' But how could it have been otherwise with one living that particular life of indulgence? His sister Christina, who lived in the spirit, saw visions, and realized in them consolation and power. As her biographer writes, 'For her the western skies are ablaze with the magnificent colours not of a sunset, but of a sunrise. Her hope is unvexed by a single doubt. It is strong and assured. She sings her hymn of the blessednesses which are laid up for them that love God, like some lark that has climbed the golden stairs to the very entrance gates of the better country. The heavenly Jerusalem is as dear to her, and as familiar, as to the exiled apostle or to St. Bernard. She prays that soon, brought home in peace, she may have her own place among its citizens, and walk in white. And God has given her her heart's desire, and has not withheld the request of her lips.' 'The full assurance of understanding,' 'the full assurance of faith,' 'the full assurance of hope,' and 'an abundant entrance into the heavenly kingdom,' are granted to the sincere in heart, the pure in spirit, the upright in life.

3. If the great hope is to be kept brightly in view, we must be careful as to how we live *the secular life.* Some think that they discern in the present generation a growing scepticism in regard to our immortal destiny. Watts has symbolized this trend in his famous picture of 'Hope,' every string of whose lyre is broken except one. What is the reason for these snapped chords? It is not because science

has discredited the Christian outlook; a goodly number, and apparently an increasing number, of illustrious scientists are themselves partakers of the glorious hope. It is not because philosophy has given any new sanction to unbelief; on the contrary, modern philosophy is looking more sympathetically than ever in the direction of spiritual doctrine and promise. And it is certainly not because poetry has failed faith; whatever may be said of certain minor singers, the master-minstrels are poets of immortality. The fact is that we live in an age of astonishing material and industrial progress; we have acquired vast wealth, and enjoy an exceptional abundance of good things. Is not the temptation and peril of our age here? Is not this large measure of liberty, leisure, and luxury stealing away our heart from God? Are we not forgetting our highest nature in the riot of meaner things, our inmost needs in our bodily needs? How can we continue to hold a grand creed if we persist in reducing life to the squalid formula, 'What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed?' 'For some have no knowledge of God.' By a fervid godliness, by the vivid consciousness of God's being, of His nearness, of His goodness, of His claims, we must sanctify all temporal things to the end for which He ordained them, if we are to keep intact and radiant the hope that redeems and glorifies all that we have or are.

Yes, let us live ourselves into the spiritual realities. We shall not dream ourselves into them, or reason ourselves into them; we must live ourselves into them. Seek, then, the assurance that transfigures life, not in logic, but in life itself; not in controversy, but in conduct; not in syllogisms, but in practical

obedience and noble action. It is wonderful how a great faith grows upon us in clearness, reasonableness, and power as we live sincere, consecrated, and obedient lives. By degrees the unseen universe becomes as real to us as the seen—nay, more so, for ' If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God.' (Jno. vii. 17).

V

THE MAGIC OF GRACE

Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new.—2 Cor. v. 17.

I. The New Creation.—The New Testament has nothing to say about mending men; it uniformly demands something far more profound. Secular systems of morality seek to bridge over the distance between the actual and the ideal man by culture, reformation, amelioration; whilst the gospel demands a change so radical and complete that it can be described only as a regeneration, a resurrection, a transformation in the spirit of the mind, or, as in our text, a new creation.

What, then, does this new creation imply? Let us for the moment consult the scientist, who ought to be able to give us some light on a question that has so much to do with the sphere in which he works. Professor J. Arthur Thomson, treating of the mutations and uplifts of Nature, writes thus: 'We turn to Nature's method of making extraordinarily new things out of very old things. For this is what has happened in a great number of cases where something apparently novel has emerged. The old is, as it were, recrystallized. The mineral becomes a jewel. . . . There is no doubt that to make an apparently very new thing out of a really very old thing is part of Nature's magic.'[1] Shall we then say that the order of grace follows that of Nature, and that the new creature in Christ Jesus

[1] *The Wonder of Life.*

is an extraordinarily new being brought out of one old and familiar? Whatever conversion may imply, something of the old man manifestly persists. The physical features are unchanged, the mental and temperamental characteristics abide; Peter, James, and John are Peter, James, and John to the end of the chapter. Personality is inviolable, immortal. Yet the converted have known a change as deep as it is delightful. 'The old has become recrystallized; the mineral has become a jewel.' The whole personality has been raised, refined, beautified; it has known this time not 'the magic of Nature,' but the magic of grace.

Let us attempt a closer view of this wonderful transformation. In another part of this Epistle St. Paul suggests a parallel between the creation of the world and the creation of the saint. 'Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (iv. 6). May we not, with the guidance of modern knowledge, pursue this parallel? When the world was made, this world as we know it, it was the consequence of two immense changes. The first of these was the expulsion of the monstrous, and the other the ennoblement of the normal. We shall endeavour to show that these two changes in the primitive earth prefigure the transformation of the penitent wrought by the grace of the Lord Jesus.

1. *The expulsion of the monstrous.* Popular literature has made us familiar with the character and appearance of the tenants of the primitive earth. A terrible fraternity! Frightful sea-scorpions, heavily armoured fishes, giant amphibians, monstrous reptiles, dragons of the air, dragons of the slime, swarmed on every

hand—beasts as fierce and destructive as colossal. As the time drew nigh for the advent of man these hideous shapes disappeared. Exactly how their extinction came about we do not know, but the nightmareish brood were blotted out as though they had never been. And forthwith a nobler order of life began to arise. Mild, beautiful, and useful creatures took possession of a brightening world. This was one part of the great change that the Creator saw to be 'good,' and that the psalmist would seem to celebrate, 'Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled; Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the ground' (Ps. civ. 29, 30).

He who becomes a new creation in the grace and power of Christ experiences a parallel cleansing from the base elements that defile and destroy. St. Paul gives an insight into the manifold and virulent working of evil in our nature. Here is a dismal catalogue of the ghastly passions that afflict us: 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like' (Gal. v. 19–21). 'And such like'—an infinity of evil, a world of iniquity, assuming endless forms of dire activity. And how hateful are these motions and outgoings of depravity! The mastodons and mammoths of the geological world were domestic pets compared with this obscene menagerie of lusts and vices. 'Now if any man be in Christ Jesus' these morbidities, irrationalities, malignities, are arraigned, convicted, and receive their sentence of doom—'a word shall quickly slay them.' 'They that are of

Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof' (Gal. v. 24). No power except that 'from on high' can subdue and expel the evil that has enthroned itself in the human breast; the one overmastering force that can effectually deal with our innate unrighteousness is the knowledge and power of the truth, holiness, and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. And is there any joy on earth comparable with that which springs up in the heart as we feel the grace of Christ getting the victory?

Once more, a new order of qualities, perfections, and experiences emerges, as gentler life succeeded the extirpation of the odious brutes of the primaeval epoch. St. Paul presents another catalogue, this time a delightful one: 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law' (Gal. v. 22, 23)—a sweet society to replace the ugly, venomous, destructive vices of unregenerate days. The jungle with its fierce and poisonous life is transformed into a garden in which flowers bloom and fruits of paradise ripen, where doves nestle and springs of joy gush forth whose waters fail not, where music fills the air and the peace and glory of the Lord brood continually.

The great change may not be completed in a day; perhaps it very rarely is. Greatly reduced in number, bulk, and malignity, some of the misshapen creatures of the geological world still linger, as relics of the carnal mind often persist to trouble the regenerate life. A recent writer on natural history notes the disturbing anomalies of the tropics. 'Surely of all the million of beautiful things in this beautiful world, palms are amongst the most lovely! Certainly parts of the tropics are earthly Edens. But beautiful objects

were not the only ones prominent in this journey, and the presence of the scaly reptiles we saw every few minutes was not altogether in harmony with the graceful palms. They seemed, indeed, to be somewhat out of place, "survivals," as indeed they are, of an earlier age of the world, when gigantic saurians—creeping, walking, swimming, and flying—were the ruling existences, in a world of slime and mud and ooze, and not in accord with these beautiful trees, which seem as if they should rather be associated with bright-coloured birds and insects than with these crawling, saw-backed monsters.'[1] Is there not often in Christian character and experience a felt discord corresponding to this tropical anomaly? Amid much that is pure, generous, and beautiful in the disposition and life of the saints, are they not sometimes conscious of disturbing 'survivals' of days happily passed away? Impure, avaricious, impatient, jealous, angry passions assert themselves, as the 'scaly reptiles' are yet in evidence amid the palm-trees and lotus flowers. Dwindling in number, abated in force, in subtle forms and movements the irregular impulses betray themselves; no longer 'the ruling existences,' they yet linger to threaten and distress.

None must assume that he is a Christian who gives free range to the foul vices enumerated by the apostle in the dismal catalogue just quoted; to do so is hypocrisy indeed. Those only are in Christ who resolutely strive against the false and impious, who long for the glorious day of the utter extirpation of the alien element, and who earnestly work toward the desired end. 'We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein'? (Rom. vi. 2). Let us vehemently hasten the completion of our conversion. He who has

[1] *A Naturalist in Madagascar.*

already secured to us the mastery of the passions can sanctify and strengthen until the purest life becomes all nature and all delight.

> *Finish then* Thy new Creation,
> Pure and spotless let us be;
> Let us see Thy great salvation,
> Perfectly restored in Thee.

2. *The ennobling of the normal.* The creation of the world, of the world as we know it, witnessed the refinement, spiritualization, transfiguration of many organisms which, passed over from the old order to the new. Certain innocent creatures and innocuous forms, however incomplete, that managed to exist in the geological age found a place in the new kingdom. What, however, we now desire to notice is that none of these remained what they were before, but acquired fullness of life, burst into a new splendour, attained a rarer virtue and perfection. It is thus with the 'new creature in Christ Jesus.' Much belonging to the natural life retains its place in the new life, yet nothing here remains as before. New and higher ideals, laws, relations, and aims come into view, and lend to the entire natural situation and experience a novel and an excelling glory.

Scientists are satisfied that the primitive world contained no proper flowers; plants of various kinds grew by the million, but all were colourless, flowerless, and the earth an immensity of green. But one day—for we must speak of a day—the plants responded to the touch of Nature's magic, the law of progressive colouration came into play, and the flowers appeared on the earth—white, orange, purple, lilac, blue, adorned with a thousand spots, stains, and streaks of loveliness. A leap indeed from the

cryptogamic plant to the rose, the lily, the orchid! The answering uplift to this is what we want, and what we get, in Christ Jesus. In response to the divine impulse, the folded powers of the soul open to the sun. Not rarely the intellectual faculties of the converted become efflorescent, sometimes in an extraordinary degree; but always the character acquires a new grace, whilst in life and action the doctrine of God is adorned in all things. And whatever enters into this complex life of ours in being, calling, or fellowship, becomes significant and fascinating as never before. The grandeur of the eternal to which the convert awakes gives a new greatness and beauty to whatever concerns him. The commonplace vindicates itself as extraordinary. Life reveals itself in a morning glory. The weed opens into a rose. 'The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God' (Isa. xxxv. 2).

Scientists assure us that in the ancient world the birds were songless, song being only a recent acquisition of theirs; there were plenty of cries of terror and pain, but nothing of the nature of music. One day, however, came the touch of Nature's magic, and, yielding to the mysterious impulse, the winged creatures broke into song. A big jump from the croak of the archaeopteryx, partly bird, partly reptile, partly fish, to the blackbird making the orchard melodious, the lark singing at heaven's gate, or the nightingale filling the night with music! This is precisely the kind of inspiration we want; and this 'the new creature in Christ Jesus' gets. The touch of the Perfect Man harmonizes all the chords of our nature, attunes us to the eternal music of love and

righteousness, whilst the grosser music of the natural life passes into a higher strain. There is little real music in the unregenerate world, as there was little in the geological age; it is full of sad discords and dirges expressing the fundamental anarchy of human nature, but that anarchy being abolished in the love of God the Father and in His Son Jesus Christ, sweet concord is restored to society, and the world is filled with more than fabled music. 'The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away' (Isa. xxxv. 10).

Finally, scientists are persuaded more or less that in the distant past, the twilight age, there was a forerunner of ours whom they designate as the 'almost-man,' an ambiguous creature, one largely brutish, smothered by animalism. But we know the hour struck when the Creator Spirit breathed into this unpromising vesture, whatever it may have been, and man became a living soul, spiritual, divine, immortal. 'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul' (Gen. ii. 7). What a leap from Caliban in the marsh to Plato, Homer, Shakespeare, to Moses, Isaiah, St. Paul, St. John! This is the breath we need once again; and by this breath divine in Christ Jesus are we raised out of the mind of the flesh, which is death, into the mind of the Spirit, which is life and peace. Henceforth we are conscious of the besetting God; we behold the unseen and eternal; the fleshly and temporal are under our feet. To break away from the dominion of the secular and sensual and enter upon the spiritualization of life is to know the mightiest

change of which we may conceive. We have found the real meaning, the larger meaning, of time and sense, of history and experience, of life and death. Liberated from the blinding, cramping, dishonouring mastery of the senses, we rejoice in the visions, powers, and felicities of an endless life. 'Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual' (1 Cor. xv. 46).

Breathe on me, breath of God,
Till I am wholly Thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with Thy fire divine.

Whatever is truly natural, legitimate, rational in human personality, circumstance, and society is purged by grace from all grossness, and the once flowerless, songless, soulless life becomes large, rich, complete, satisfying.

'The old things are passed away; behold they are become new.' Not a partial transfiguration, but one of the whole personality, environment, and experience. Everything is brightened within the man, as if Nature had been melted down and recoined, and, as the inevitable sequence, the all-encircling world acquires new import and charm. Every man's world is a reflection of himself; the environment a mirror that flashes back upon the consciousness our own image. If we are handsome, it congratulates us; if we are not, it frankly tells us the truth. To the large-minded everything is great, to the scientific marvellous, to the artistic beautiful; whilst, on the contrary, to the incurious, the mean, the sordid, everything is more or less prosaic, coarse, or ugly. It is the same morally. To the spiritually-minded the whole sphere of contemplation, duty, and

experience is invested with deepest interest, and life signifies solemn obligation, pure pleasure, enthralling promise.

'Behold!' Archimedes, startled by a flash of illumination, cried out in wonder and joy, 'I have found it! I have found it!' And after many centuries we continue to understand the rapture of his glad surprise. But that discovery is negligible compared with the soul's awakening to the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ Jesus. The believer has found, so far as his personal duty and peace are concerned, the key to the riddle of the universe; he is rid of the weary weight of an unintelligible world; he has seen the high and gracious design of its burdens, sorrows, mysteries; and marvels with a deep content. His conscience ceases to accuse, the heart is at rest, the understanding is satisfied, and the star of a great hope relieves the darkness of the sad days that come to all. Nature, revelation, society, domesticity, yea, even the common tasks, display new forms and colours to interest and delight. In the first gush of Christian light and joy the happy convert 'thought that all the sign-boards had been freshly painted'; so does the 'marvellous light' of Christ make even the drudgery and commonplace of life to shine, as the pillar of fire burnished every stick and stone of the wilderness. A new heaven and new earth without a new heart would be all in vain; but given the new heart, a new heaven and earth naturally unfold; the mineral becomes diamond, brass mellows into gold, the wayside weed flowers, the meteor changes into a star, and, more wonderful this time than even the miracle of Cana, the water changes into wine. 'Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as

the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the hurt of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound' (Isa. xxx. 26).

II. THE CREATOR.—'If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature.' Creation is strictly the work of God. 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' We always find Him at the beginning. When once the creative act has taken place, we can adapt, modify, develop; but that 'the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear,' is a declaration that receives the consent of faith and philosophy. As the living God stands at the origin of the physical order, so does He dominate the moral order. Nothing can be wrought satisfactorily in character and experience except the divine grace first implant in us the principle of a new life. When once the word is implanted which is able to save the soul, we must become co-workers with God in the care and development of the inborn word, therefore the divine charge came to Israel, 'Make you a new heart and a new spirit' (Ezek. xviii. 31). Yet it remains true that all real regeneration of character is primarily the work of God in the penitent and receptive heart. *We* cannot banish the foul, command the pure, and realize the desired perfection. As Wesley affirms, 'Only the power that makes a world can make a Christian.'

Deep thinkers in all generations have perceived that character can be fundamentally changed only by a supernatural operation. Socrates taught that virtue is not really teachable, and proceeds to explain, 'If a man has a young horse to be broken or trained, he finds without difficulty a professed trainer, thoroughly conversant with the habits of the race, to

communicate to the animal the excellence required; but whom can he find to teach virtue to his sons, with the like preliminary knowledge, and assured result'? And he concludes that 'virtue is vouchsafed or withheld according to the special volition and grace of the gods.'[1] And the modern philosopher, Schopenhauer, agrees with the ancient. 'We must finally make up our minds to see that, as regards its chief characteristic and its inner nature, virtue, like genius, is to a certain extent inborn; and that just as little as all the professors of aesthetics could impart to any one the power of producing works of genius, so little could all the professors of ethics and preachers of virtue transform an ignoble into a virtuous and noble character, the impossibility of which is very much more apparent than that of turning lead into gold.'[2] Virtue, like genius, is of supernatural quality, and it is as absurd to expect that moral systems will produce virtuous, noble, and holy men, as that our aesthetics will produce poets, painters, and musicians. Candid writers are free to confess that we cannot change the essential bias of our nature; and inasmuch as that is the main thing, anything else is of slight consideration. Finally, the greatest Teacher of all in a few cleaving words puts dispute out of question: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew' (John. iii. 6, 7).

'Nicodemus answered and said unto Him; How can these things be'? It is remarkable how the latest philosophy supplies an answer to doubt, and admits the possibility and reasonableness of this new

[1] Grote, *History of Greece*, vol. vii., p. 116.
[2] *The World as Will and Idea*, vol. ii., p. 149.

creation. It teaches that 'in organic evolution an impulse causes the upspringing of a new form incommensurable with its antecedents.' It designs to make clear the existence of 'A Reality which Creates,' that is, of a God who creates, who is free, and whose creative effort is continued in the evolution of species and in the constitution of human personalities. Bergson's doctrine of the impulse of life has been interpreted as the idea of a living God in a living Church enduring in continual new creation.[1] Once more philosophy seems to lend such sanction as is possible to it to a mystery of our faith. But in the experience of ten thousand times ten thousand we have a surer witness to the reality of conversion than in any speculative system. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead' (1 Pet. i. 3).

Yes, this creative power is realized in the doctrine, grace, and fellowship of Jesus Christ. The eternal Son in revelation is made known as the Creator of the material universe. According to St. John, 'All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made' (i. 3). St. Paul testifies, 'God created all things by Jesus Christ' (iii. 9), whilst the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that God hath spoken unto us in His Son, 'whom He appointed Heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds' (i. 2). So once more Omnipotence is expressed in the Divine Son; He who made the world makes the Christian. 'But all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ' (2 Cor. v. 18). 'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works'

[1] Dr. Wildon Carr.

(Eph. ii. 10). The saving, uplifting, transfiguring grace is vouchsafed in Him, and nowhere else is the secret found of a new nature and a new life. Here lies our hope for the realization of the aspirations whose gleam lures us on, and secretly comforts us amid mysteries and sorrows. Heartily trusting in the Lord Jesus as the world's Saviour and ours, enjoying daily fellowship with Him, drinking into His Spirit, and following in His footsteps, the old man dies out, and, 'renewed in the spirit of our mind,' we 'put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth' (Eph. iv. 24).

VI

THE TRIUMPH OF THE SPRING[1]

Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.—Isa. xxxii. 15.

As special privileges of various kinds have been granted to the several ages and nations, the special privilege of these latter days is the gift, in a surpassing measure, of that spiritual power by virtue of which our highest hopes can alone be realized. In all ages the Spirit of God has been active, working out His will and purpose, but in the fullness of the times He has revealed Himself in plenary majesty and power. All terrestrial conditions being ripe for His advent, our Lord appeared full of truth and grace; and with His ascension into heaven the world was prepared for the dispensation of the Spirit of illumination, holiness, and power. Such is the dispensation in which it is our privilege and joy to live. Our Lord has opened up to the race new springs of spiritual life, new sources of divine power, new fountains of light, purity, and blessedness. This was the substance of the great promise that He gave to His disciples, not in His parting hours only, but throughout His ministry; and how amply it was fulfilled is demonstrated by the preaching and writings of the apostles. Let us, then, ponder, for our consolation and inspiration the meaning of this sublime gift of the ascended Lord to His Church on earth.

[1] *Preached on Whit-Sunday.*

I. We remind ourselves of *our absolute dependence upon the Spirit of God for the inspirations and influences which secure man's highest welfare.* In the very striking prophecy recorded in this chapter Isaiah refers to a period when, owing to its disloyalty, Judah was reduced to a condition of extreme exhaustion and distress. 'Upon the land of My people shall come up thorns and briars; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city.' And this unhappy condition of things was to continue 'until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.' Then everything was to be blessedly changed. 'Judgement shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. And My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.' Everything turned upon the pouring out of 'the Spirit from on high.' The central idea implied in this prophecy is that we are just as dependent upon God for the influences which vitalize the intellectual and spiritual life of man as the fields are dependent upon the sunlight and the shower.

1. The *dependence of the material world upon the spiritual universe* in which it lies embosomed is being more and more recognized by serious naturalists. As Professor Simpson observes, 'Life is something more than the raw materials it employs.'[1] And life is not merely 'something more' than the raw material it employs; in its nature and grandeur it is unspeakably beyond the crude matter through and by which it operates. Professor J. Arthur Thomson gives this fact bold expression. 'A tree contains more

[1] *Spiritual Interpretation of Nature*, p. 15.

mystery of creative power than the sun from which all its mechanical energy is borrowed. An earth without life, a sun, and countless stars, contain less wonder than that grain of mignonette.'[1] Alfred Russel Wallace bears emphatic testimony to the same effect. 'The modern scientific morphologists seem to be wholly occupied in tracing out the mechanism of organisms, so that they hardly seem to appreciate the overwhelming marvel of the powers of life, which result in such infinitely varied structures and such strange habits and so-called instincts. The older I grow the more marvellous seem to me the mere variety of form and habit in plants and animals, and the unerring certitude with which, from a minute germ, the whole complex organism is built up, true to the type of its kind in all the infinitude of details.' And this 'life' he recognizes as the manifestation of a divine energy. 'In my early unregenerate days I used to think that only material forces and natural laws were operative throughout the world. But these I now see are hopelessly inadequate to explain this mystery and wonder and variety of life. I am, as you know, absolutely convinced that behind and beyond all elementary processes there is a guiding and directive force; a divine power or hierarchy of powers, ever controlling these processes, so that they are tending to more abundant and to higher types of life.'[2]

In the beginning the 'Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters,' evoking the beautiful world; and still He broods over earth and sea, calling forth fresh forms of life and loveliness. Not only by His aid were the world's foundations laid, but He is

[1] *Introduction to Science.*
[2] *Letters and Reminiscences*, vol. ii., pp. 54, 248.

immanent in the whole creation; and its successive stages, with their appropriate garniture of glory, are His incomparable artistry. The splendour of the world on which we look to-day is the outshining of the indwelling Spirit, without whom the standing miracle of earth and sky must sink into chaos. There are not two Spirits of God, one working in Nature and the other in the rational realm; but one and the selfsame Spirit creates the glorious things which enrich both. The manifold wealth of Nature flowing upon us every hour is contingent upon His ceaseless action.

How the growing doctrine of the spirituality of Nature makes some of our great beliefs more intelligible, and silently does away with difficulties which have perplexed many! When matter was regarded as so much mechanism regulated by obstinate laws of its own, it was difficult to think of it as responsive to the behests of the moral ruler of the world, or as affected by the thoughts, conduct, and prayers of men; but when understood as a spiritual system, responsive to the mind of God and men, it is easy to think of it as expressing the Almighty design, and as determined by the obedience or disobedience of mankind. How rational and credible the appeal of the apostles to the men of Lystra! 'Ye should turn from these vain things unto the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: . . . who left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness' (Acts xiv. 15, 17). And that a spiritual Being should resent the conduct of the disobedient, while He responds to the prayers of the faithful, is in keeping with reason and

experience. The trembling strings of the mighty lyre respond to the touch of God and man. The world is ours as we are God's.

2. Again, mark how *the Supreme keeps intellectual gifts in His own hands*, and how pathetically helpless we are when those gifts are withheld. We repeat a thousand times over the axiom that 'poets are born, not made,' which is only another way of saying that God reserves genius of all types in His own hands, kindling the vital spark with sovereign freedom when and where He wills, and usually where we least expect. If the Eternal Spirit fails to bestow original and splendid faculties, we cannot create such. Education does not supply genius. Ours is an age of popular and earnest culture, and yet the critics loudly complain that our literature is a quotation, our art an imitation, our eloquence an affectation, our music and poetry an echo. This verdict may be too severe; but whilst education is essential to bring out whatever gifts are ours by nature, it is sufficiently manifest that education creates no intellectual revival. A new science now appears, known as 'eugenics,' its design being the creation of a superior type of mankind. According to Nietzsche, 'Humanity should constantly propose to itself the production of men of genius.' No doubt a most interesting vocation, yet one hardly promising dazzling results. Hitherto the cleverest chemists have failed in the attempt to fabricate synthetic pearls and diamonds, and the undertaking is far more hopeless to evolve mental Koh-i-noors of the magnitude and water of Plato, Shakespeare, Newton, or Shelley. We can never create genius, nor can we regard it as a 'lucky bubble of the pot of protoplasm.' If anything is certain, it is that every good gift and every

perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, and no skill on our part in attempting the production of intellectual eminence will ever render us independent of the sovereign Spirit of knowledge, wisdom, and power. 'There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding' (Job. xxxii. 8). All intellectual gifts are of supernatural origin and essence; and in this matter we are wholly in the hands of God, who alone can convert an age of intellectual barrenness into an epoch of surpassing vision and fertility.

3. It is certainly not less true that *our moral and spiritual life are dependent upon the vivifying influence of the Holy Spirit.* The main theme of the prophet in the chapter before us is righteousness—its nature, its working, its effect; and his argument is designed to show that the creation, energy, and prevalence of righteousness are strictly consequent upon the presence and operation of His Spirit who is glorious in holiness. The effort of certain moralists, which is being continually repeated, to sever morality from spirituality, goodness from godliness, can only succeed at the expense of morality itself. If the naturalist is constrained to acknowledge the operation of a supernatural force to account for the persistence and perfection of phenomena; and the philosopher is persuaded of the transcendental character of genius; the religious moralist stands on no debatable ground who maintains that a well-ordered life must be based upon the affections, conscience, and will, and that these faculties derive their efficacy from the indwelling Spirit of God.

Outside the religious sphere it is always being argued that art is dependent upon a spiritual supernatural element without which it rapidly degenerates

into formality—indeed, ceases to be worthy of the name of art. It must be inbreathed, not a matter of calculation, industry, elaboration. Mozart could not tell how he made a tune ; even a whole symphony, he said, unrolled itself out of a leading idea by no logical process. Keats said that no poetry was worth anything unless it came spontaneously, as leaves on a tree. And Edward FitzGerald tells how he had no faith in works of art done on theory and principle. All the greatest artists are at one in recognizing the mysterious force whose expression is the immortal drama, statue, poem, or symphony. They marvel at their own creativeness, and know well that when the inspiration ceases the magic of their work ceases. The wind bloweth where it listeth ; they dimly comprehend its nature, and know not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. We accept the greatest literature and art as a mere matter of course ; but a divinity shines through it more brightly than through the fairest forms and sweetest music of the material creation. How much more, then, is the operation of the Divine Spirit essential if the moral life is to reach the ideal ! If the perfection of artistry, eloquence, and music demand the spiritual impulse, can we hope to acquire sublimest virtues, to work noblest deeds, to fulfil the highest duties of life, without that availing impulse ? What are our works but ' dead works ' whilst they lack this vital spark ? And how impossible for our utilitarian morals to become the holiness of truth, without the breath of God ! If lawgivers, psalmists, and prophets needed inspiration to declare the laws of the Kingdom, how much more do we need the heavenly power to keep them ! The righteousness that avails is a living righteousness ; deeply rooted in faith in God, in the

love and power of God, and daily inspired anew by His fellowship. By the operation of the Holy Spirit the motions of the flesh are annulled, the inertia and enmity of the mind of the flesh overcome, and all fruits of light brought to rare perfection. We cannot suspend our fellowship with the eternal righteousness of the living God without fatal consequences to conscience, character, and duty. The force and fire of intellectual and moral life are of supernatural genesis and essence, and will not long survive severance from their native source.

II. *That the Spirit of God reveals Himself in exceptional communications of richness and power at special times and seasons* is another important truth to be remembered for our instruction. 'Until the Spirit is poured upon us.' We think of the Day of Pentecost as an altogether unique phenomenon; yet it is not so, but one according to the analogy of the divine government as conducted from the beginning.

1. Science shows that in the development of the creation there were what, without fancifulness, may be described as *natural Pentecosts*. At certain distinctive periods the Divine Worker revealed His power and glory in an extraordinary manner. The day when Nature proceeded from the inorganic to living organisms; when mere sensation passed into consciousness and reflection; when raucous cries resolved themselves into musical speech—these and other memorable transitions were truly Pentecostal, splendid outbursts of the eternal wisdom and power. Tongues of fire descended, ethereal sparks flashed through the darkness, quickening the dull clay into forms of grace, gifting those forms with intelligence, inspiring them with delight. Seasons of uplifting,

inbreathing, illuminating, glorifying, were those initial days through all the natural sphere.

And these times of the revelation of the divine glory were not confined to the creative age; they continue to assert themselves, sporadically shining forth. Take this passage from the recent work of a distinguished scientist: 'This is not very different from the attitude taken up by Dr. A. Smith Woodward and other palaeontologists: that there is a persistent progress of life to a higher plane in the successive geological periods, and that there is some principle underlying this progress much more fundamental than chance variation or response to environment. There are in the life of species sudden fundamental advances which an American naturalist, Professor Edward Cope, called "expression points," and in which he saw the manifestation of some inscrutable inherent life-force.'[1] So the Creator Spirit abides in His creation, and certain expression points of fundamental change and advance testify to His presence, activity, and glory.

2. History records ages of astonishing mental increment and achievement which may justly be described as *intellectual Pentecosts*. Such periods stand out from ordinary times by virtue of the number and greatness of their famous sons. Greece in the age of Pericles knew a golden epoch, the very dust of which is prized to-day, and will continue to enrich the latest posterity. The Augustan age of Rome signified a memorable outburst of immortal genius. The Italian Renascence comprehended a veritable milky-way of gifted spirits renowned in art, science, literature, and eloquence. England is proud to recall 'the spacious days' of Elizabeth, when the stage was

[1] Grew, *The Growth of a Planet*, p. 266.

simply crowded with superb actors—statesmen, dramatists, poets, adventurers, admirals, and commanders. During a few years in the middle of the eighteenth century France boasted of a brilliant constellation of poets and philosophers; whilst Germany runs back to fetch the age of gold that produced Goethe, Kant, Schiller, and her master musicians. The Spirit of God abides immanent in the race, and the dullest generation is relieved by a few great souls that dwell apart as solitary stars; but at distant epochs galaxies of rare spirits kindle the grey years into noontide glory, and posterity is happy to live in the afterglow. The absolute reason, the perfect beauty, the eternal power, bursts the muddy vesture, and the nations are startled by an intellectual splendour of a glory excelling all former gifts of the Father of lights.

3. The *spiritual Pentecost* recorded in the Acts of the Apostles need not, then, excite surprise, although, at the first glance, it appears unique and anomalous. That wonderful day, with its lambent flame, its intoxication of spiritual power, its enlargement of faculty, its ecstasy of gladness, is strictly in keeping with the divine method in nature and history. It was mysterious, but the Pentecosts of Nature are mysterious; it was miraculous, but the Pentecosts of the mind are miraculous. What a host of richly gifted men suddenly emerged! 'And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams' (Acts ii. 17). This prophecy was suddenly and abundantly fulfilled. As recorded by St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, a rich variety of gifts was freely

distributed amongst the members of the Church, until it seemed as though each one bore the likeness of a king, as if at length all God's people had become prophets. How truly great those primitive saints were is seen in the fact that their letters have survived the ages, and that their work endures and grows whilst empires perish.

Pentecost was no meteoric flash, but the breaking forth of a divine and quenchless flame destined to purify humanity and to convert the world into a temple. Profound, vast, and permanent were its saving and hallowing effects. The Spirit of God awoke the lethargic spirituality of the multitude. Our Lord had propounded an impossible moral ideal, which was now to be triumphantly realized. Conventional religion took fire. The prose of ecclesiastical morality rose into the poetry of holiness. Ordinary character was ennobled into saintliness. The heart of the bigot, strangely warmed, grew big as the world. The unknown became well known. Timid men and women sprang into heroic stature, and as martyrs vanished in a blaze of glory. The mighty event of Pentecost was not an aberrant event, out of keeping with the ordinary course of nature and history; and no other revelation of divine energy may compare with it. No revelation of the sovereign will in the evolution of Nature, no sudden accession of magnificent intellectual power to an elect nation, can parallel in its immense significance the powers and gifts of Pentecost; in its nature and consequences it eclipses every other express intervention of heaven for the enrichment of mankind. The opulence of moral and spiritual power it brings to such as are ripe for it is one of the capital facts in the history of the race. The former dispensation has no glory by

reason of the glory that excelleth; and the glory of the latter days is found in our possession of such abundance of spiritual grace that the highest reaches of life and destiny have become accessible to all believers.

These extraordinary revelations of spiritual power are not to be considered as confined to the Apostolic Age. We have just seen that whilst scientists recognize in geological periods 'a persistent progress of life to a higher plane,' they also recognize in 'the life of species sudden fundamental advances,' 'expression points,' in which the underlying inscrutable force conspicuously declares itself. What are the wonderful revivals which periodically gladden the Church but such 'sudden fundamental advances,' 'expression points,' in which the Spirit of God demonstrates Himself in the kingdom of souls in such a manner as to excite the attention and wonder of mankind? As a rule, the indwelling Spirit works silently, and is revealed only in 'the persistent' moral progress of the race; but ever and anon, 'suddenly there' comes 'from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind,' filling the Church, shaking the world. 'Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out' (Song of Songs iv. 16).

We conclude with two reflections:

One great consolation arising out of this visitation of the Spirit relates to our personal experience. The will of God is even our sanctification, our moral perfection, and the will of the believer is fixed on the attainment of the same ideal; but its realization is a question of indwelling power, of which too often we are deficient. With many the upward path implies constant anxiety, fretfulness, strain; the

noble ambition of attaining the 'goal unto the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus' involves so much fatiguing endeavour, doubtful progress, disheartening failure, that the spiritual life, so far from being one of joyfulness, is little more than a protracted, painful, and dubious striving. This is not, however, the scriptural ideal of the growth in grace, and it is to be explained only by the lack of a more vigorous inward life. John Ruskin writes concerning art: 'Is not the evidence of *ease* on the very front of all the greatest works in existence? Do they not say plainly to us, not "There has been a great effort here," but "There has been a great *power* here"?' This is equally true in relation to surpassing Christian character. The completest and purest life is not the result of irksome effort, but an expression of power; they who charm us most are not those who show signs of tension, but those on whose 'very front' is the evidence of ease. Strong motive, a firm faith, warm affection, the full assurance of hope exclude morbid strenuousness, and make ideal saints. 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these' (Matt. vi. 28, 29). If, then, we are to be free from consuming care in the worldly life, we ought to be no less so in the culture of the soul. The mighty forces of infinite Nature are working in the bulb of the lily, and have made it lovely and fragrant without more ado; and if we thought more of the strengthening of the heart by the indwelling of the Almighty Spirit, there would be less need or disposition to labour and fret, as we so often do, about the concerns of the soul. Great power dispenses with painful effort, and life

becomes assured, serene, victorious. We may all claim the large grace of Pentecost. The apostles make it clear that the sacred fire purifying the spirit, transfiguring the life, is no benediction confined to some exclusive circle, but is promised to all who seek it in the fullness and efficacy of its virtue. The glorious work wrought in the first disciples may be wrought in us.

Again, in a richer baptism of the heavenly power we become effective workers in the kingdom of God. The primitive disciples waited until endued with power from on high, and we effect little until we become spiritualized instruments in the Master's hand. Too often in our evangelism we trust more than we ought to our learning, machinery, method, and money; we are rather concerned with the ritual, statesmanship, and programme of the Church than with that interior fire on which virtually all success depends. Wallace, as we have seen, complains of 'the modern scientific morphologists who seem so wholly occupied in tracing out the mechanism of organisms that they hardly seem to appreciate the overwhelming marvel of the powers of life.' With even greater plausibility might not a similar criticism be passed on the methods of the religious sphere? Ecclesiastical morphologists are so wholly occupied with the mechanism of the Church that they hardly seem to appreciate the overwhelming importance of the powers of life, without which all organization is futile. Wonderful evangelical results are attained with the minimum of material and routine; whilst highly organized Churches only register decline. We require a real faith in our creed, a joy in worship, a Christlike love to men, an overpowering sense of God's presence and blessing, and an enthusiasm for

the coming of His kingdom, if we are to hail a revival. All the Churches to-day need to look more longingly and believingly to the spiritual sources. We may be confident that great Pentecostal visitations will yet burst forth upon the Church and the world, when a nation will be born in a day. It will come, and we know not how nearly we stand to wonderful times.

Are we ready for them? Unless we have aspiration, faith, receptivity, the precious influences that encompass us are lost. The Sahara Desert is visited by tremendous rainstorms, but is none the better for them; not a drop but descends in vain, for the heat evaporates the rain before the drops reach the sand. We may live in such an unsympathetic state that the rain and dew of heaven leave us unrefreshed and barren. 'They all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer' until the power came upon them. In the spirit of penitence, supplication, expectation, consecration, and unity must we await the heavenly visitation; and a plenteous rain shall fall in refreshing, life-giving showers on God's heritage, and make everything to live that now droops and dies.

VII

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man.—EPH. iii. 14–16.

ONE of the most insistent cries of our age is for ' Power, more power.' We are better acquainted with the natural forces than our fathers were, and we avail ourselves of them to an extent to which they were strangers ; yet the cry for larger measures of power does not cease, and scientists are as intent as ever upon discovering new sources of energy. Some believe in the possibility of tapping the earth's central heat, thus providing a perennial supply of inexhaustible force. Others look upon the ocean as a vast reservoir of mechanical power. Many prophesy that wind-power will become the force of the future ; whilst there is a consensus of opinion that if we could succeed in harnessing the energy of the sun it could be made to perform all the mechanical work of the world. So we crave for power to realize the natural kingdom ; to subdue it, rule it, to use and enjoy it. Yet is there not another kind of power, a much superior kind that we need far more emphatically than we need any new kind or degree of material energy—the power to realize ourselves, to rule ourselves, to make possible to us the glorious things of

the highest life? For a divine power effectual to these ends all serious souls sigh: power not from the deep places of the earth, but from Him in whose hands they are; not from the sea, but from Him who rules its waves; not from the wind, but from Him who rides upon its wings; not from the sun, but from Him who lit its fires; the power of the Highest to transcend our painful limitations, to subdue in us the irrational element, and to make us equal to the sublime of character and duty. This breath of God is the inspiration we covet.

The paramount claim of the New Testament is that in Christ Jesus this power is made ours. It brings us a code of conduct more complete and lofty than any ethical code with which it may be compared, yet its chief gift is that endowment of power that makes possible true holiness of spirit and of life. Sir W. M. Conway, in his *Crossing of Spitzbergen*, relates how 'before midnight the sun shone brightly, but there was no warmth in his beams. At the same altitude above the horizon in India his rays would be hot enough to give a sunstroke.' Such a midnight sun, shining more or less brightly on the Jewish and Gentile worlds, with little warmth in its beams, preceded the Advent; with the Advent that sun broke forth in his strength, not only illuminating the moral world with marvellous light, but also sending forth waves of pulsating life to quicken all sympathetic souls into fruitfulness and beauty, as the tropic noon kindles Nature into her last fruition and glory. This life-giving virtue is the salient feature of the Christian dispensation. Whilst it exalts the moral ideal, and renders it more luminous and authoritative, its unique glory is found in the fact that it inspires the constraining, lifting, driving

power essential for the realization of the ideal. How much already has the apostle written in this Epistle concerning the marvellous power! He is so full of the thought that it emerges in every few verses. 'That ye may know the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ' (i. 19, 20). 'The gospel, whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me according to the working of His power' (iii. 7). Again, in our glorious text; and finally the doxology: 'Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen' (iii. 20, 21). After ages of moral inability, and all the sadness that goes with it, the apostle has suddenly come to the knowledge of victorious strength in Christ and is intoxicated with the thought. The believer 'can do all things,' do them with facility and with triumph. As supreme genius paints and sings and declaims with absolute mastery and joy, so henceforth in Christ Jesus shall the saints reach and maintain the character of blameless purity with ineffable delight. How beautiful, serene, and satisfying does life become when Christ's strength is perfected in our weakness, when the risings of pride, selfishness, impurity, and every irregular desire are habitually suppressed, and we freely keep the law in its length and breadth! Few things trouble us after that.

In what special way does this power avail the believing soul that submits itself to the action of the divine grace? Let us consider the twofold operation

of the Holy Spirit to the end of our sanctification and utmost salvation.

I. The *expulsive* power of the Spirit. We no sooner desire to obey the higher law, to live the better life, to satisfy the ideal of the soul, than we become aware of a dark and obstinate element within us contradicting our aspirations. We find that the moral life does not unfold with the facility of the intellectual. The education of the mental faculties demands more or less strenuousness; patience and resolution are required to overcome a certain inertia and obtuseness. But in the cultivation of character a thwarting, hostile element appears, rendering it specially difficult to realize the perfection to which we aspire, an element that has no parallel in intellectual training. And it is here that sincere men are so often distraught. Could they escape this experience, other distress might be borne; but the embarrassing, humiliating sense of moral confusion and failure is never long absent from consciousness, inflicting mysterious pain. And it is really of comparatively little use to attempt to deal with other disturbing factors unless we first understand and deal effectually with the master trouble within our personality. The malady of the soul, whatever it may be, the false bias of our nature, lies at the root of our deepest discouragement and sadness, although its baneful presence and action may not be recognized distinctly.

Revelation has done immense service in dragging this obnoxious power into the light and making known to us its inmost nature. It is made known to us as the law of sin that works in our members like a leaven, blinding, debasing, blighting, cursing our whole being and existence; and it is in the power of the Holy Spirit alone that we can hope for its

expulsion. We have only to mark two features of this fatal principle to be conscious of this, viz. its spirituality and its strength.

1. The *spirituality* of sin. In a memorable passage St. Paul depicts the interior conflict with which all are familiar. Read carefully his description of the tragic struggle, Rom. vii. 14–24. No deep experience of our humanity was ever described more truthfully or graphically. An old poet celebrates

> That force of ancient phrase, which speaking paints;
> And is the thing it sings.

No profound action of the human mind was ever reproduced with greater fidelity and force than this struggle of the soul with its tyrant foe. Certain critics have invented an ingenious theory to explain St. Paul's dilemma. Admittedly his father was a Hebrew, and they suppose his mother to have been a Greek, so they conclude that the disharmony which spoiled his life was the clashing within his personality of the diverse racial characteristics inherited from his parents; the Hebrew and Greek genius, with their contradictory ideals and sympathies, met in stern conflict, perpetually contending for the mastery. The historic proof for all this is lacking, its absence, however, being readily supplied by 'scientific psychology.' But St. Paul did not find the source of the terrible antagonism in his blood; he knew it to be of quite another character. He looked far deeper, and we must look deeper than is implied by any such hypothesis. Then again the modern theory teaches that the conflict by which we are rent is that of reason resisting the animal proclivities that survive in us from our brute ancestry, our rational nature denying the carnal impulses

which yet seek to assert themselves; and this, we are instructed, is the correct explanation of the internecine strife St. Paul misunderstood. There is, however, far too much to distinguish sin from animal appetites and passions, and we must look to other and deeper sources for its nature and origin.

It is urged in defence of these and similar theories, whose purpose is to account for the disunion and strife of our nature, that they tend to clear away the mystery which has so long enshrouded the subject, making it simple and intelligible. But all such assumed solutions of the problem are to be suspected on that very account; the problems of the soul are not to be made simple after this fashion. A recent authority in science writes thus: 'According to recent research, it is not so much the colour of the environment which directly affects the larvae (of the colouration of caterpillars) as the intensity of the light. In other respects also some of the first crude statements made on the subject are being modified. It may, indeed, be accepted as a general truth in biology that whenever a series of phenomena seem to be susceptible of an extremely simple and beautiful explanation, that explanation is wrong and founded on an imperfect acquaintance with the phenomena in question. All recent progress in biological theory has shown that life is not simple but complex, and has involved a substitution of extremely complex theories for simple ones.'[1] When scientists write like this about the lower forms of life, are we hastily to adopt simplifying hypotheses of those profoundest problems of the human heart and conscience which have called forth the wonder, reverence, perplexity, and despair of the greatest

[1] Newbigin, *Colour in Nature.*

poets, dramatists, philosophers, and divines of all generations? It will be long indeed before the great mysteries of theology are made simple, 'the mystery of iniquity' last of all.

We do not approach a true conception of the nature of sin until we recognize its spirituality. We must cease to confound it with any motions of the body, any defects of matter, or with any traits of animalism, and find its secret in the defiled conscience, the perverted reason, the misplaced affections, the infirm will. It must be convicted in its essence and source, and not confused with vehicle or instruments. It is the 'carnal mind,' yet mind; the 'flesh,' yet 'the mind of the flesh.' It must be resolved into what at first and last it is, a question of self-will setting at defiance the universal and eternal law. Our Lord gave the true and highest example when 'He pleased not Himself'; and sin lies in the contrary decision, to please ourselves in contradiction to the cosmic law, and to Him in whom the universe holds together. All treatment of sin is ineffectual that does not get to its root in the human soul. Only in a secondary sense do we war against flesh and blood; in the primary sense we contend with the spirit of darkness, with the 'sin that dwelleth in us.'

Here, then, the Spirit of grace becomes our availing strength. 'That ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man.' '*Into* the *inner* man.' As Moule notes, 'No surface work here.' The Spirit is to reach our central life, penetrating to the depths of manhood, and our strength and hope are to be in this inworking power of grace. Christ by the Spirit is to 'dwell in our heart'; ruling at the very fountain of thought, emotion, volition, action: mind against mind, will against will, spirit

against spirit; the omnipotent mind, will, spirit, coming to the rescue of our spiritual life, taking up all the place, assuming the absolute sovereignty, expelling every proud, unruly, impure thought, passion, and delight. How different from the specific of shallow moralists who mistake the cleansing of the skin for the cleansing of the soul!

2. The *strength* of sin is another feature giving us grave concern, and one only to be effectually withstood in the power of the Spirit of God. 'The power of sin is the law' (1 Cor. xv. 56). The law reveals its malignity and force. 'The power of sin!' What an appalling thought! How completely it masters men, making its victims veritable bond-slaves of the devil! How it persists! We remember hearing a gentleman say that on visiting his father's farm after an absence of sixty years he found the thistles flourishing on the same spots they occupied when he was a boy. Is it not too often the same with our moral infirmities and faults—we resent and deplore them, yet they survive, they strengthen with the years? The covetous hold their gold with a still firmer grip when their hand has become too feeble to hold anything else. The intemperate suffer what cannot be told, yet stammer, 'I will seek it yet again.' The wrathful are ashamed of their temper, and yet their last sun goes down on their wrath. So with pride, envy, vanity, and all the vices. Every abortive struggle with evil passion seems to leave it only more rooted and vigorous. We clearly discern the rebellious principle entrenched in our humanity, yet are pathetically incapable of dislodging it. The X-rays may reveal within our body a foreign, poisonous substance which, however, cannot be removed; so we discern in our mind, more clearly than the surgeon perceives

the bullet in our bones, a fatal element we are powerless to expel. It has become so intermingled with our nature, so deep, subtle, and stubborn, that it would appear possible for death alone to deliver us.

Here again, then, we see the necessity for the Spirit's action, the action promised in our text. 'For this cause I bow my knees.' 'I pray to God to give you strength within,' infused strength. The central idea of the whole passage is strength; the strengthening of the *whole* inner man.[1] 'Strengthened with power through His spirit.' 'To be with power made mighty.' 'According to the riches of His glory,' according to the abundance and plenitude of His own perfections, is He to enrich and empower His saints. 'The strength of sin' is countered by the strength of Omnipotent redeeming grace. Elsewhere the apostle suggests our supreme consolation in the good fight, 'But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would' (Gal. v. 16, 17). In our helplessness the Spirit of truth and power comes to our rescue, strengthening our soul victoriously against every sinister passion so that we may realize the fair visions and aspirations of our better self. It is not a struggle of *my* spirit against the 'body of sin': if it were only that, I might well despair; it is a conflict between the royal Spirit of God and my carnalized spirit, and whilst I prove loyal to the indwelling Spirit of love and holiness there can be no doubt as to the result. St. Paul appealed from the impotence of man to the

[1] Meyer.

power of God to save from a dark fate. He held firmly to the lofty moral code of the Old Testament, to that code made yet more impossible to flesh and blood by the spiritual interpretations of the Lord Jesus, yet he rejoiced exceedingly in the possession of an enlarged measure of spiritual power which not only rendered possible the keeping of the law, but made obedience instinctive and delightful.

Do we not too habitually brood over our weaknesses and failures, whilst neglecting to seek the hallowing power that is ours in the Lord? A while ago Sir Oliver Lodge observed that wise men do not worry about their sins, and he was severely rebuked for this. Yet we cannot for one moment believe that so serious a man intended that we should ignore the solemn facts of conscience; what he desired was to divert us from morbid brooding over weakness and failure, and to set us more eagerly on the pursuit of that spiritual health and liberty and joy which pertain to our high calling in Christ Jesus. The suggestion of Sir Oliver Lodge is a renewal of the admonition given long ago by Bishop Wilson, 'Let us not afflict ourselves with our failings; our perfection consists in opposing them,' and, let us add, in realizing that fullness of power by which we shall oppose them successfully. So certainly as we follow this advice will new springs of energy be opened in our soul, and a new joy brighten our life. None ever knew a more acute sense of sin than did the apostles; yet they reigned as kings, exulted as conquerors, rejoiced as the bridegroom over the bride, because they habitually proved that the grace of God was the master-power expelling the power that makes for unrighteousness, and enabling them to do all the gracious things that God put into their heart to do.

II. The *protective* virtue of the indwelling Spirit. All around is a great world of evil, of evil men, things, influences, and in countless ways it appeals to us and puts us in peril. May we not say that the possibilities of transgression are as multiplied as are our opportunities for every kind of duty and pleasure? We are continually conscious of the pressure of temptation. The sirens haunt every sea; seducers infect all dry places. Every stage of life brings its special danger, every rank, every situation. Our whole environment abounds with possibilities of evil, with inducements to its commission. Wherein, then, lies our safety in the midst of these multiplied assaults and risks? Several legitimate sources of what we may consider external aid are open to us. It is a comfort to recall the fact of the divine government watching over us, safeguarding us and our interests. Many Christians derive confidence from their belief in a guardian angel, and we may all be strengthened by the assurance of angelic allies ministering to us and for us. Our incorporation with the Church of the living God is a sterling bulwark that may justly inspire consolation and courage. And, finally, we may institute a variety of prudential securities against unnecessary exposure to temptation, and against the power of inevitable temptation. Yet, at last, our inviolability is guaranteed by none of these, but by our being 'strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man'; that Christ dwells in our heart through faith. All that is more or less external is concerned with the outworks, whilst the believing heart is the citadel—the magazines are there, the garrison is there, above all, the Captain is there. Our salvation is a question of the reality and depth of our life in Christ; all is precarious that does not hang on this.

The physical world affords many proofs of the fact that external defence sadly fails to secure immunity, and that creatures are safe only in the soundness and vigour of their interior life. The palaeontologist is impressed by the fatal effect which an ever-increasing development of armour inevitably produces upon the vitality and persistence of a race. Many animals inhabiting the geological world were encased in extensive, massive, and complicated armour, and in the end this very armour brought about their extinction. The creatures without armour, or whose armour rapidly degenerated, alone survived. Scales, shells, sheaths, carapaces, proved only precarious and temporary defences ; if the coat of mail of a creature was not found in its vigorous life, it was doomed. This feature of creature life is recognized as valid in the beasts and birds of the present. It is conceded that many of them are indebted for safety to their peculiar colouration rendering them more or less invisible to their enemies, yet Douglas Dewar, writing concerning the birds of India, remarks : ' As the hen drongo is a bird capable of looking after herself, there is no necessity for her to be protectively coloured. As I have repeatedly declared, one ounce of good solid pugnacity is a better weapon in the struggle for existence than many pounds of protective colouration.' In other words, its preservation is far more a question of intrinsic vigour than of any trick of concealment. The very same thing appears in plants that the geologist noted in the animals and fishes of the prehistoric world. Beccari, describing some of the orchids of Borneo, says : ' It appears to me to be almost a general rule that the more a plant is provided with anomalous, complicated, and uncommon contrivances, the more precarious and difficult must have been its conditions of

existence in past evolutive periods. They have attempted to better their position by special adaptations, but the complications attending these have finally proved a disadvantage rather than an advantage to them.' They were deficient in vitality to face and overcome the difficulty of their environment, and sought to perpetuate themselves by politic devices, which in the end practically brought about their extinction. No exterior precaution atones for the absence of central heat and force.

All this is not irrelevant, but directs attention to what in character we are so apt to forget, the necessity for keeping the heart with all diligence. The coat of mail must be worn on the soul. It is true that 'We cannot spare the coarsest guard of virtue,' yet it is essential to remember that we are not immune by vows and pledges, nor by efforts to exclude temptation, or to reduce it to a minimum; but by confronting the world of evil with a soul empowered for all goodness by the Spirit of holiness and love. After all that has been said and written concerning the prudential defence of the moral life, it is surprising how little the New Testament has to say about external defences against the fascination and force of temptation. Whilst it does not omit to enjoin such action, its chief emphasis is always laid on the strength and soundness of the soul itself. The conscience touched to fine issues, the will invested with imperial authority, the understanding illuminated by large and confident views, the imagination delighting in pure and exalted visions, the affections set on things high and holy—all this in its fullness is meant by Christ in the heart; and this is the New Testament philosophy of salvation in a dangerous world. The vitality and richness of the spiritual life is the saint's defence against all evil.

'Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same thought; for He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that ye no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God' (1 Peter iv. 1, 2) (R.V. marg.).

Yet many of us are unmindful of the secret of peace. We disturb and distress ourselves by dwelling on the actual and possible perils of life, instead of looking within and availing ourselves of the power of the Spirit to fortify the soul. Many dare not enjoy the good, bright, beautiful, joyous things of life, thinking of the mischief that may lurk in them. A French writer introduces into one of his stories a person who, 'the better to guard against temptation, used a cunningly-contrived opera-glass which destroyed the harmony of the fairest features by hideous distortions.' Not a few good people put this glass to the eye of their mind, thus persuading themselves that things really good and beautiful are baneful and, for the safety of the soul, to be shunned. It is, however, in the power of a strong faith, of a burning love, of an assured hope, that we are safe from any unwholesome influence alike of things legitimate and illegitimate. The strengthening of the inward man deprives temptation of its magic, and keeps the soul in 'peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin.'

We know the condition and channel of this gift of spiritual power, as we know its greatness. 'For this cause I bow my knees.' We have spoken of scientists searching for power at various sources—in the sun, the sea, the storm, the depths of the earth. Their difficulty, however, is to lay their hand on the nexus by which these forces are rendered available. The problem is to set a trap to catch the sunbeam, to

switch on the central heat to the waiting machinery, to harness the white sea-horses of the Atlantic to the car of civilization. But we know how to make the mighty forces of the spiritual universe our own. 'I bow my knees.' How simple! How sublime! How effective!

VIII

THE LAW OF LIBERTY

There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death.—Rom. viii. 1, 2.

Ideal goodness is spontaneous and effortless. Noble souls are little occupied with reasoning and calculation, or little troubled by self-consciousness; the law is fulfilled though forgotten. As expressed by Coleridge, 'The angelic nature would act from impulse alone.' When the will of God is done on earth as it is done in heaven, it is done precisely in that way. With immediate vision the soul perceives the true, the lovely, the good; and without pause, friction, or failure follows the gleam. The right desire, word, or act springs from the depths of the spirit as perfume from a flower, or song from a bird. To interfere with the liberty of the soul is to thwart its aspirations. There is no sense of genuine rest and satisfaction until we are perfectly free to obey the convictions and impulses of our highest nature. Whilst these are deflected, contradicted, or frustrated, a serene mind is impossible. Everywhere in Nature freedom is the condition of perfect development and happiness, and it is supremely the condition for the perfect development and felicity of human nature. To infringe the freedom of plant or animal is to impair its special charm, and to restrict the free expression of the inspired soul is to mar its perfectness and delight. We must be so entirely identified with the truth that

right action shall not result from the lower reason of fear or interest, but from the higher, of a will so free from all base alloy as to sympathize by instinct with the eternal laws, and such a will must be free to express itself; perfect felicity is possible only on these conditions. Whatever deranges the integrity of the soul, puts it out of tune with the eternal laws of the moral universe, destroys the joy of life.

Let us, then, inquire as to how in Christ Jesus this ideal condition is realized.

I. Our Lord gives us the *most vivid sense of the authority and grandeur, the reasonableness and graciousness, of the moral law we are called upon to obey*. It might be thought that to raise and intensify our conception of the law of righteousness was to multiply our difficulties and to make more remote the prospect of happiness; but, in fact, pure joy is possible only so far as we understand and reverence that law.

So far, then, as *the majesty of the law* is concerned, our Lord proclaims it with utmost solemnity. We are taught by Him that it is no local, technical, or temporary enactment, but that its seat is the bosom of God, its sphere the universe, its obligation everlasting, and far from abating a jot or tittle of its requirements He emphatically confirms it, brings out its spirituality, enthrones it as the law of His kingdom. In the *Japanese Letters* of Lafcadio Hearn there is a passage in which he expresses the opinion that through science the modern world has acquired a new sense of the majesty of law. 'When we learn scientifically at what an awful cost of suffering and struggle and death any single moral being is evolved, surely the sense of the value of a life is increased unspeakably. And, on the other hand, how much more terrible does a crime appear! For of old a crime was a violation of the laws of a

country, a particular society, a particular theology; but in the light of the new philosophy, a real crime becomes a crime against not only the totality of all human experience with right and wrong, but a distinct injury to the universal tendency to higher things—a crime against not humanity only, but the entire cosmos—against the laws that move a hundred millions of systems of worlds.' Whatever new sense of the grandeur of moral law the world at large may derive from evolutionary doctrine, the Bible student has little to learn on that score from the new philosophy. He has always known of the measureless scope and eternal obligation of the law of righteousness; and, far more, he has understood that a crime is not only a violation of the laws that move a hundred millions of systems of worlds, but chiefly it is an offence against Him out of whom the universe arose, and in whom it holds together. So sublime is the moral commandment as enforced by our Lord, so serious its violation, so magnificent its rewards, so overwhelming its penalties. 'It pleased the Lord, for His righteousness' sake, to magnify the law, and make it honourable' (Isa. xlii. 21). This He did pre-eminently in all His teaching, finally sealing His testimony with the tremendous affirmation of the Cross. He gave the race a new sense of the awful sanctions and irreducible claim of the law which is a transcript of the holiness of God, blessed for evermore. We are not likely to pay much respect to the law of conduct whilst it is regarded merely as a matter of social convention and sanction, but we listen to it with awe as it comes from the lips of Christ stamped with the idiom of eternity.

Our Lord also set forth, most impressively, the *reasonableness and graciousness* of the highest law. The whole idea of obedience as taught by Him is most

beautiful. How different from the materialist's 'conformity to world-order,' especially when that order is viewed with little complacency; or from the Stoics' submission to a blind fatality! All thoughts of iron law, ruthless fate, harsh necessity, are entirely absent from the laws of life as laid down by our Lord. It is 'the will of your heavenly Father' that ye do this or that; that governs you and all that concerns you. So all suspicions of injustice, irrationality, despotism, are banished. 'His commandments are not grievous'; they are based on reason, are altogether right, at every turn respect our freedom, and in every detail contemplate our happiness. So we are called upon to obey 'the royal law of liberty,' to prove 'what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God' (Rom. xii. 2).

II. In the grace of the Lord Jesus we are freed from *that baser element of our nature which contradicts the holy law* and brings us into ignoble bondage: 'the law of sin and of death.' Just now we spoke of the peace and gladness of those who are perfectly free to obey the convictions and impulses of their true nature, who think truly, live in all purity, doing only the things that are lovely and of good report, without pause, friction, or failure. But how far from us is the realization of this ideal condition, so passionately desired by sincere men! Our reasonings may be wise, our desires good, our purpose worthy; but our heart plays us falsely, and we come piteously short of the essential truth of righteousness. We continually detect ourselves falling away into irregular imagination and passion. The lure of temporal advantage warps the soul from its integrity, wild cravings betray into the sensual mire, pride creeps in to debase what promised the noblest, fickleness mocks resolution, and inexplicable weakness invites unworthy compromise. Our way

of life does not conform to our better judgement ; our character sinks below the pattern we approve ; conscience convicts, our heart condemns us. The alien power that has entrenched itself within coerces us into grooves of sentiment and conduct involving acute unhappiness ; we become angry with ourselves, despise ourselves, despair of ourselves. Here, then, we are face to face with the fact, the personal, experimental fact, that we are no longer free to obey the divine impulses of the soul ; our best, truest nature cannot unconstrainedly and joyously unfold itself ; what ought to be great deeds and moments are blighted ; and we turn aside to paths of which we disapprove. However it has come to pass, we have lost our birthright of freedom, are ' sold under sin,' subjected to a disgraceful bondage of ungodly, irrational, and base elements and taskmasters. Delighting in the law of God after the inward man, we forthwith proceed virtually, practically, to deny it.

In the intellectual life there is no antagonism to any branch of knowledge corresponding to the hostility displayed in the moral life when its several duties are enforced. The student listens to the recital of the stupendous facts of astronomy without any emotion of displeasure, he hears the long story of geology with a serene, unvexed mind ; and there is nothing in the sciences of mathematics, chemistry, or biology to provoke to bitterness and protest. On the contrary, the knowledge of such truths only excites wonder, desire, and delight. How different it is with the presentment of moral truths ! Set forth the claims of truth and purity, of justice and generosity, and whilst in their heart of hearts the dishonest, the impure, the selfish will acknowledge their obligation, they will resist them with wrath and invective. You become an enemy if you

tell the truth, disclose the beauty of purity, or invite to deeds of love and sacrifice. It was the moral teaching, not the philosophical, that cost Socrates the cup of hemlock ; it was the doctrine of a spiritual righteousness that nailed Jesus to the cross. ' The mind of the flesh is *enmity* against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be ' (Rom. viii. 7). Here the root of discord is laid bare. We discover the secret of our bondage. We know what prevents the realization of the great possibilities of which we are conscious.

It is this law ' of sin and death ' established in our members that is ever bringing our best counsels and resolutions to naught : ' What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh ' (Rom. viii. 3). Auguste Comte, the founder of the Positivist system, repeatedly laments the weakness of the altruistic instinct on which he so largely reckoned ; he was painfully conscious that this basic defect of human nature jeopardized the whole elaborate system he sought to establish. But not only does the altruistic instinct lack depth and force ; all the moral instincts are equally deficient. If the social reformer postulates chastity as the corner-stone of his system, he soon becomes aware of the lamentable inadequacy of the instinct of purity. Or, if persuaded that moderation of appetite is of the essence of character and the indispensable condition of social prosperity and happiness, he soon has reason to deplore the sad insufficiency of the instinct of temperance. Or, perhaps, insisting on truth and justice as the cardinal virtues that alone guarantee personal and public welfare, it is not long before he discovers how debilitated is the instinct which he has charged with so heavy a burden. As a matter of fact, the whole moral life is anaemic, as, indeed,

revelation declares it to be; and all the instincts are unequal to the tension to which they are subjected in a disordered world like this. Systems of well-considered social reform that arouse rosiest expectations are continually proving nugatory; and when this is the case it is usually thought that they were defective in some particular of method, or that they were not properly administered; when the simple truth is that they broke down in the moral weakness of human nature. We 'approve the things that are excellent,' but, attempting to reduce them to practice, we discover to our distress what we are. As Edmund Burke justly declares, 'It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.'

Is, then, release possible from this foreign yoke which denies the soul the right and opportunity to follow its own native sublime instinct and law, or is the alien element ingrained and inevitable? Years ago a few naturalists adopted a hypothesis that was known as Dualism. They believed that certain plants were not simple, independent vegetable entities, but compound organisms, consisting of contradictory yet inseparable organs, one normal and the other parasitic, the parasitic being the predominant partner, living on the other. But scientists of repute unanimously rejected the theory. They maintained that the fungus and its host were essentially disparate and hostile, and could not possibly be combined in one organism. However closely the parasite might be interwoven with the plant, and be liable to be mistaken for an integral portion of it, yet it was a foreign body, and could not at the same time be an organ of the system upon which it fed; Nature

forbade the monstrosity.[1] Which things are an allegory. No parasite in Nature ever clung so closely to its victim, so penetrated and poisoned its tissues, so thoroughly identified itself with all its members and motions, as the fungus called sin has identified itself with human nature and infected all human experience and action. Considering how evil taints our blood, disorders our passions, saps our will, and vitiates our whole constitution and history, one might be forgiven for mistaking it for an integral part of our primitive and essential being; yet on the best authority we know it to be a vile parasite that has fastened upon us, an alien thing that is not, nor ever can be, an organic faculty, a native principle, an essential feature of our divine nature. The righteous character of the Creator forbids the paradoxical creation. What an immense service has revelation rendered us by setting forth this fact in a manner so authoritative and convincing!

'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death.' In the grace of the Lord Jesus is the foreign yoke broken and we enter into 'the liberty of the glory of the children of God.' So far as sin is ungodliness, it is abolished in Him who reconciles us to God, causing us to delight in Him, in His will, and in His service. So far as sin is selfishness, it is expelled by the pure expansive love which He sheds abroad in the believing heart. And so far as sin is sensuality, it is purged by His grace; for whatever may be imputed to animal origin, there is no mistake about its antidote, for 'the requirement of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Thus, as we apprehend that for which we are apprehended in Christ Jesus, our regenerate nature becomes free to act, to develop itself

[1] Cooke, *Low Life amongst Plants.*

according to its own laws, to embody its ideals and aspirations. It is no longer restrained, rebuked, coerced; but as the lark sings, the tree blossoms, the eagle soars, so does the soul exult in its liberty, its gladness, its glory.

III. We note, finally, *how in the power of the Spirit the life of obedience becomes a life of completed freedom.* Freed from the opposing elements of pride, selfishness, wilfulness, and carnality, by the action of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the selfsame Spirit abides with us to render a life of obedience one of perfect liberty. His work is twofold; emancipating us from the false, and then drawing out and sanctifying every spiritual faculty of our redeemed nature. 'But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life.' (Rom. vi. 22). 'Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty' (2 Cor. iii. 17). Or 'Where the Spirit is Lord, there is liberty.' His gracious work is so to purify and energize our moral life that every grace of character shall be evolved, every noble deed done, every saintly habit established, as by an invincible law. 'The virtuous man must be a poet and not a drudge of his virtues to have them perfect. If he could by *implication* perform all the virtues, that is, not aim to be temperate, nor aim to be honest, nor aim to be liberal, but in his lofty piety be all three without knowing it, then is he the good moralist. The ecclesiastical dogma of "Faith, not Works" is based on this truth.'[1] So our philosopher admits that an ecclesiastical dogma may occasionally turn out to be a verity; and here he finds one that proves so, inasmuch as it recognizes virtue to be a question of the soul, spontaneous and unconscious, and

[1] Emerson, *Journal*, vol. iii., p. 427.

not a matter of calculation and constraint. True, 'the virtuous man must be a poet.' He is never in the truest and fullest sense a virtuous man until he is a poet; his virtue the expression of faith, emotion, inspiration, delight. But is not this exactly what the Spirit of God, glorifying the Christ, strives to make him? 'For we are His workmanship' (Eph. ii. 10). Or, as some choose to render the passage, 'We are His poems.' He makes poetry of us. The spiritually righteous man, living in the full power of his faith, in the obedience of the faith, enjoys the inspiration, the spontaneity, the glow and rapture of a great poet, only as much more as the spiritual is beyond the intellectual.

The perfect freedom of Christian obedience is explained by two great words, '*life*' and '*love*.' 'The law of the Spirit of life' makes possible a triumphal life of goodness. The obedience of the saint is first inward and vital, then external and practical; it is the acquiescence, the concurrence, the passion of the mind and heart, and thus expresses the freedom of life, the power and joy of life. An external dutifulness that lacks the consent of the inward man is bondage, however it may be disguised; the consenting, willing, kindling spirit knows real liberty. The man himself, in thought and feeling and will, must become a decalogue before duty can become nature and delight. External righteousness may be a close imitation of that which is spiritual and genuine, yet at last the distance is immeasurable between a living thing and a manufactured article; and nowhere is that distance vaster than between a living and a formal morality. A recent volume tells that when Herbert Spencer went to live in a new house, and it came to a choice of flowers that would harmonize with the background, he insisted upon having artificial flowers in his vases, as they would

require no replenishing, He considered they were so well made that the visitor would think them real, and admire them accordingly, although bees and butterflies would hardly be expected to be similarly deceived. His friends remonstrated, 'That no one would dream that Herbert Spencer would have anything artificial about him.' The friends were wrong; the choice was characteristic of his whole philosophy, as it is of the entire school of secular moralists he represented. His moral system was rootless; it struck no fibres deep into the secret and profound depths of the soul, exactly where man really begins to live; like his Parisian beauties, it required no replenishing, whilst spiritual excellence must be renewed day by day; and it was so artistically wrought out that, like the elegant posy in the vase, it might readily be accepted as real, and admired accordingly. Yet, after all, the waxen flowers were only a superficial artifice, lacking truth, beauty, and fragrance; and so far were significant of the philosophy of their clever admirer. He who would adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things must be animated and sustained by the sincerity and enthusiasm of the heart. The condemnation of all secular morality is its soullessness, no matter what its technical, mechanical, exterior propriety. Sterling goodness is quick with the throbbing of the heart; only then is it accepted on high. What can it avail if whilst an external harmony is maintained between man and the higher law, anarchy rules in the heart, and at every step the law properly understood is ignored and flouted?

How wonderful is life! How full of power, courage, sagacity, creativeness, beauty, joy! And such is the eternal life that is in the Son, and that He breathes into the believing soul. 'It is the spirit that quickeneth;

the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life' (John vi. 63). It is all mysterious; but the Lord of life knows how to impart life, and with it the freedom that makes free indeed. 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it' (Jer. xxxi. 33). The written law becomes the law of the inward life, allied with all the resources of the soul, vitalizing all good instincts, and making them effective unto every good work. There is no drudgery or slavery after this. A living law of holiness makes light of birth's invidious bar, of unfriendly environments, and of whatever else would seek to embarrass and enslave. The saints of the New Testament never complain of the severity of the commandment, or hesitate like men infirm of purpose who are summoned to duties beyond their strength. Their temper is that of conscious conquerors; they attack duties of supreme difficulty with sublime confidence; they exult in their strength; the law of the Spirit of life renders them serene and invincible.

Love is the other word that converts law into poetry and music. It is a mistake to think that the law written in the heart makes us independent of the written commandments. It does not. The law of Sinai with its sharp definitions and dogmatic prohibitions 'is good,' as St. Paul declares, and is not to be discarded or depreciated. In all culture specific rule has its place; and whilst the greatest masters in a sense transcend it, they never cease to recognize its essential importance. In the intellectual life an apprenticeship must be served. As Ruskin has so eloquently shown, the teacher often finds it necessary to say that this or that must or must not be done, although a time will come to the true artist when he has that inspiration

in him which is above all law. This life is our stage of moral apprenticeship in which we need the guidance of the precept; farther on, and in the great beyond, the spirits of just men made perfect may be trusted. By His constant deference to the letter of the law the Master set us an example that we should closely follow.

But this respect to the commandment in nowise circumscribes our freedom. How copiously our Lord treats of law and love, of love as the dynamic of obedience! 'If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments' (John xiv. 15). 'He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love Him, and will manifest Myself unto Him '(21). St. John, in his First Epistle, abundantly sets forth the same vital truth. And there is no anomaly in this combination of law and love; they are the two poles of the same sphere, and the whole Christian life develops on the basis of the complementary doctrines. The heart, that magazine of power, that master-passion of affection, that mainspring of life; admiration, adoration, enthusiasm, by virtue of which men have done their most heroic deeds, borne the heaviest burdens, made the most splendid sacrifices; the rationalist system of morals wholly omits, or faintly recognizes, trusting all to interest and policy. But, whilst honouring the understanding, Christianity exploits the heart to the utmost, finding in its strong, pure passions the best guarantee for faithfulness of life. Love to God, awakened by the glorious fact that He first loves us; love to Christ, kindled by the vision of the Cross; love for the Law itself, because it answers to the desires and preferences of the renewed heart; love to one another, in the fellowship of the

same redemption and the same hope,—and the sense of painfulness in obedience is at an end. Does the Master make of the believer a poet who sees in the decalogue a lyric and a symphony? So does He also convert His disciples into lovers who see in Him, and in His law, all their desire. Perthes writes to Jacobi, and it expresses the essence of the matter: 'Only the man who is possessed by love can solve the riddle of our being and of our freedom. Love is the visible form of freedom. He who loves, and even he who does not love, can see if he will that love is free as nothing in the world besides. I am in bondage if I do not love, and I cannot love if I am in bondage; and he who loves knows, as none else does know, that individual freedom and the will of God are one and the same thing.' Let us surrender ourselves wholly to this sovereign passion, and the ideal life shall follow without calculation, strain, or distress.

> Unswerving shall we move, as if impelled
> By strict necessity along the path
> Of order and of good.

IX

THE PRINCIPLE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

For this cause we also . . . do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.—Col. i. 9, 10.

The scriptural conception of the saintly character and career is that of an ever-increasing strength and joyfulness. So far the scriptural conception is in agreement with the general law. It was said of William Pitt, 'He never grew; he was cast'; yet, as a rule, the normal person grows mentally in power and resource. Occasionally a youthful saint may astonish us by his completeness of character and exceptional ripeness of experience; but the law of the spiritual life is that we go from strength to strength. Revelation everywhere assumes this.

I. Note, then, *in what this growth consists.* It is twofold, a growth in character and in that spiritual principle of which character is the expression.

What is implied in the growth of Christian character? The grosser sins are renounced in conversion. The prophet Daniel addressed Nebuchadnezzar, 'Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness' (iv. 27). Broken off, short and sharp. To the same effect St. Paul writes: 'Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour

of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in revelling and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy' (Rom. xiii. 12, 13).

But other faults of a more subtle order may not be discontinued so decisively, although renounced in spirit and purpose. We have heard of the wonderful way in which Luther Burbank, the Californian florist, has succeeded in freeing flowers and fruits from their original bad qualities. He has grown a walnut without tannin, and freed it from its disagreeable taste; developed a dahlia with a pleasant instead of a disagreeable odour; produced plums and apricots without stones; and evolved thornless cacti. So, happily, by the grace of God, are those who follow after holiness freed from faults of constitution, habit, and training. They realize with joy that the temper, censoriousness, pride, selfishness, immoderation, which distorted and distressed earlier days, grow fainter, are more rarely troublesome, fall steadily away.

Beyond the elimination of evil qualities, we may realize with deep satisfaction that even the defects of our character are mysteriously becoming merits. That the best of men are moulded out of their faults is not unlikely; as we have the defects of our qualities, we may have the qualities of our defects. Virtues sometimes become faults; and, on the other hand, vices arising out of misdirected energy may be transformed into positive graces when once the heart is set on right ends, as indeed we see in the cases of St. John, St. Peter, and St. Paul. Through the alchemy of grace the blemish becomes a perfection, adorning where it once disfigured. A naturalist writing in *My Tropic Isle*, complains that whilst the

flora of North Queensland is most showy, the absence of kindly fruits must be regretted. Immense quantities, alluring in form and colour, are produced, without a single variety of real excellence. Quite a long list of pretty things might be compiled; but few are satisfactory, the majority being either bitter, acrid, or insipid. However, the disappointed scientist consoles himself with prophecy. 'When one contemplates the unpromising origin of the apple of to-day, and the rich assortment of fruits here higher in the scale than it, imagination delights to dwell upon the wonders which await the skill of a horticultural genius. The crude beginnings of scores of pomological novelties are flaunted on every side. The patient man has to come.' The optimism is justified, for our choicest fruits have been produced by skilful culture out of crabbed and poisonous berries of the jungle. So from the wild grapes of unregenerate life does the Spirit evolve delightful clusters of fruit; gifts, energies, and passions once perverted become pure and beautiful, supposing Christ to be the gardener. See in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians how largely the choice vintage of the garden of God proceeds from the crude growths of Nature's wilderness, transmuted by the hallowing Spirit. Verses 19–21 show the jungle and its bitter growths; whilst the succeeding verses present a vision of the same transformed into more than the purple grapes of Eshcol, or the fabled apples of gold. 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance' (vv. 22, 23). Let us, then, regard with a patient mind the moral blemishes of immature believers, knowing that yet they may bear ripened fruit unto everlasting life; and when humbled by

the consciousness of moral failure, let us still be hopeful concerning ourselves, keeping ourselves in the love of God, the glorious sunshine in which every Christian grace matures and ripens.

Finally, to mark the fuller development of our weak graces completes our joy. Many sincere Christians, whilst conscious of much in their life that is genuinely good, are distressed to find it so faint ; they are almost as deeply abased by the sight of their virtues as pained by the evidence of their faults. Victor Hugo says of our Queen Anne, 'No quality of hers attained to virtue, none to vice.' Whatever we may say of ourselves concerning the latter, we have reason enough to lament the faintness of the former. We often need to pray :

> Forgive our faults, forgive our virtues, too,
> Those lesser faults, half-converts to the right.

But this need not always be. It is delightfully possible that the graces of to-day so sadly lacking in the glow and glory of life may become full of the bloom and sweetness of perfection. The distinguished Californian just quoted has succeeded in raising out of a wild field daisy a blossom five to seven inches in diameter ; gladioli of greatly enhanced beauty he has taught to flower around the entire stem, instead of on one side only ; the poppy he has so enlarged that it measures ten inches across its brilliant bloom ; and the amaryllis has increased in diameter from two inches to nearly a foot. Are not corresponding enlargements and transfigurations possible in our moral and spiritual life ? Our present graces may be starved and meagre ; our kindness, justice, truth, patience, purity, and love, of the

meanest growth, no better than the coarse grasses and dwarf blossoms of the prairie; and yet how large their possibilities! How delicate and splendid these traits of Christian character when seen in the Master, and in the disciples who follow Him closely! And there is no strength, serenity, or charm that we admire in the elect that may not be reproduced in the weakest of us.

Philosophers with little sympathy for Christian doctrine generally have yet believed in the perfectibility of human nature; although their idea of perfection is not that of our Lord and His apostles. 'Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matt. v. 48). 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another' (John xiii, 34). 'Walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing' (Col. i. 10). 'And every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself; even as He is pure' (1 John iii. 3). It was not of such a perfection that they dreamed. The pessimistic philosophers degraded man to prevent him from imagining that he could have any relation to God, and to discourage him from entertaining a high moral ambition; whilst the most enthusiastic optimists never proposed for emulation a moral ideal much beyond the level of the best existing manhood. But the New Testament boldly relates us to God, and demands that we mirror His perfection; it also relates us to the Son of Man, in whom the divine ideal of manhood is realized, and requires that we 'walk worthily' of His sublime character and ministry.

Let none be deaf to this high and holy calling, as, alas, we are too prone to become. How

easily and imperceptibly do we acquiesce in a mediocre experience, and think it the whole of our inheritance! An ever-increasing intensity and fruitfulness of Christian life is possible, and it is our duty to strive unceasingly for the fullness of the blessing. How immense the distance between the algae, the seaweed, the lowest form of plant life, and the Victoria Regia of the Amazon, whose leaves may be sixty feet across, and whose flower be measured by the yard! Yes, and how immense the distance between the spiritual status of one Christian and another, or between the experience of the same Christian at different times! Semper tells of two varieties of butterfly, long regarded by entomologists as distinct species, but which are in fact only the summer and winter forms of the same species. So sharply are some Christians contrasted that it is difficult to believe that they belong to the same spiritual order; yet they do, only the one appears in strength and glory, the other in apathy and unloveliness. So widely contrasted is the experience of the individual believer at different times that he can hardly regard himself throughout as in the one state of grace; yet he is, the distinction being between his summer's fullness of life and the stagnation of a winter's eclipse. Brethren, it is high time that we wake out of sleep, put on our beautiful garments, glorify our Master by our entire devotion to His service. 'Wherefore let us cease to speak of the word of the beginning of Christ, and press on unto full growth' (Heb. vi. 1 and marg.).

II. *The principle of growth.* The origin of the Christian character is a new heart and a new spirit, and all development begins with that inward renewal, a renewal in the spirit of the mind. The culture of

character may be attempted on other lines, prompted by different motives, dominated by independent models; but such culture is not Christian. Revelation teaches that character is based on a spiritual principle, a principle of life, and its growth in power and beauty implies a fuller expression of that life. It is therefore vain to seek the ennoblement of the outer life unless we are careful vigorously to maintain the interior life. 'I am the true vine. . . . Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in Me' (John xv. 1 and 4). Here, then, the vital truth is stated without theological or metaphysical verbiage; the principle of moral perfection is affiance in Christ. He is absolutely essential to the realization of all the high, far-off excellence of which we have an intuition and to which we sincerely aspire. In His presence we must dwell, His beauty contemplate, His merit trust, His love share, into His spirit drink, and in His steps we must follow. As the vine is *everything* to the branch, so fellowship with Christ is *everything* to the aspiring soul. 'I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus' (Phil. iii. 12).

We may borrow an illustration from another sphere to help us to understand this intimacy and oneness with our Lord. John Gibson, the famous sculptor, writes thus in his diary: 'I renewed my visits to the Vatican. It is not to criticize that I go there, but to seek instruction in my art, which the Greeks carried to perfection. Those few masterpieces which have come down to us, though I have dwelled upon them thousands of times, still at every new visit are contemplated by me with fresh wonder and admiration,

such is the influence which anything perfect, both in design and execution, has upon the mind Those grand works of the Greeks are ever new, and always produce fresh enchantment however often they may be surveyed.'[1] Thus must we linger over the pages of the New Testament, contemplating closely and lovingly the living, speaking, active Jesus, whilst He grows upon us, more and more filling our imagination, mind, and heart We can grow in strength and grace and blessedness only whilst this is our habit.

We must grow in the *knowledge* of Christ. See our text: 'To walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.' To increase in the knowledge of Christ is to increase in the knowledge of God; He is the only true, saving, vivifying source of such knowledge. How prone we are to think that we *already* know Christ, when indeed we only know something about Him! There are many degrees of knowledge, and we have not fully learned Christ until we know Him and the power of His resurrection. The tourist who, guide-book in hand, hurries through the Vatican galleries, may flatter himself that he knows the immortal masterpieces, and for the rest of his life talk as if he did; but he does not know them as Gibson did, who had 'dwelt upon them' intently and sympathetically 'thousands of times.' Really, only Gibson knew them at all. So, if we are to attain to the knowledge of Christ, a thousand times must He engage our thought and affection, and each time it will be with fresh wonder and admiration. Do we then with assimilating, identifying knowledge know the Lord? 'Have I

[1] *Biography*, by Matthews.

been so long time with you, and dost thou not know Me, Philip?' How many of us might the Master similarly reprove!

We must grow in the *faith* of Christ. Accepting Him as 'the way, the truth, and the life,' it is essential that we confide increasingly in Him as such. Then in the midst of trouble and mystery our souls will experience a deeper calm, being content to ask Him fewer anxious questions. But having confessed our sin with the sighings of a contrite heart, let us once for all, and with growing conviction, shelter in His merit, trust in His grace, expect His utmost salvation; and as He has given us solemn assurances for the great future, we may with unshaken faith boldly face death and the grave, resting upon His word and promise. 'That we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but dealing truly in love, may grow up, in all things unto Him, which is the head, even Christ' (Eph. iv. 14, 15). In his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians St. Paul writes: 'We are bound to give thanks to God alway for you . . . for that your faith groweth exceedingly' (i. 3). Ever more deeply satisfied with the hope of the gospel, let us once attain this 'full assurance,' and to us the promise shall be fulfilled: 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee' (Isa. xxvi. 3).

Lastly, we must grow in the *love* of Christ. How continually the apostles dwell upon this! To realize in our Saviour more vividly the goodwill of God to His creatures, His unfailing kindness and faithfulness, His eternal mercy and grace, until our heart glows responsively, this is to grow in the holiest

passion of divine love; and herein is plenty of room to grow. Shakespeare affirms:

> There lives within the very flame of love
> A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it.

Yet most of us know even a human love in which this, happily, is not true; and as we apprehend more clearly the love and beauty of God in the face of Jesus Christ we become conscious of an adoring affection that no kind of wick or snuff can abate, and in this white inextinguishable flame our soul and its felicity are perfected.

Here, then, is the secret of abounding righteousness, that we live in close fellowship with the Lord. 'He that abideth in Me, and I in Him, the same beareth much fruit.' The branch abiding in the vine is empurpled with many clusters, so union with the Lord adorns with every grace.

III. *The condition of growth.* In a word, it is that we give all diligence to further the progress of religion in the soul. That the kingdom of God be fully set up in our heart and life must be our commanding thought, our supreme purpose, our constant endeavour. The neglect of the spirituality of life whilst busy with many things means the decay of character, with all the sad experiences which that decay implies. In every department of life the co-operation of man secures the increase of God, and this is equally true of the growth and glory of the soul. A controversy amongst theologians, once acute, is still revived from time to time. It turns upon the question as to whether sanctification is gradual or instantaneous, whether it is attained by one definite act or by a more or less prolonged striving; some holding that in a favoured hour, by an act of consecration and

faith, the believer scales the heights of purity and joy; whilst others dogmatically contend for the ascent by degrees through the sanctification of the discipline of life. May not both theories be true? Not so long ago it was the dogmatic assertion of the evolutionist that a new species of plant was the result of a long series of minute and imperceptible modifications, and that anything of the nature of a leap was unthinkable; but now sudden, inexplicable variations in plant life are generally recognized, and it seems likely that the science of the future will find a place for both explanations. Why may not the evolution of character comprehend the two rival methods of sanctification—the act of faith and the habit of faith, the discipline of many days and experiences and the sudden vision and uplifting that puts all life on a higher plane and brings into it a purity, power, and joyousness that it never knew before? The two theories are reconciled in the experience of many saints.

Let our theory be what it may, no high or higher stage of life will be reached without whole-hearted devotion. Again and again in meditation and prayer we must renew our strength. We have just seen how Gibson resorted 'thousands of times' to the galleries of the Vatican that he might study beauty of form in the masterpieces of marble; and in so doing kindle his own genius; so the psalmist frequented the sanctuary that he might 'behold the beauty of the Lord' and bear away somewhat of its lustre. We must often be found in the same place if we are to know a growing beauty of spirit. The word of the Lord too must be our daily study. The Chinese have a saying to the effect that 'if reading be discontinued for three days, conversation loses its flavour.'

Does not the most temporary neglect of the great book mean that our spiritual life misses quickening qualities? And we must ever be alert to the teachings of concurrent discipline; observant of the endless vicissitudes of life, so that we may learn their varied lessons to the increase of our knowledge, the growing certitude of our faith, the perfecting of our obedience.

We are warned most solemnly and repeatedly against slackness. As Professor Simpson writes concerning natural growth, 'The process of growth when once begun cannot be arrested: it must proceed or the organism will disintegrate immediately.'[1] so we may fear the decay of the work of grace in the soul. Let us watch lest by inertia and carelessness we forfeit the great attributes and possibilities of our spiritual nature. Let our prevailing, pervasive, passionate thought be that we so live to God that we may become more like Him and more fit to see His face.

IV. The *joy* of growth must not be forgotten. How real is the pleasure of growing out of old faults! To get rid of failures and frailties that have cost bitter tears, thoroughly purged from old sins, is beatitude indeed. To be conscious that the defects of our character suffer a change into sterling qualities is a delightful experience. An artistic lady of our acquaintance unluckily made a blot in her album, but ultimately contrived to colour and gild it so that it now adorns the page it once disfigured. To effect a corresponding change in character, to see the blemish pass into beauty, the stain glow into a star, is to rejoice with exceeding great joy. To observe elementary graces mellowing into matured excellence is a rare source of delight,

[1] *Spiritual Interpretation of Nature*, p. 15.

appealing to all jaded saints. 'Man's highest action is to reach up higher,' and to reach forth to the fuller glory of Christian character is an exquisite satisfaction to all who attempt it. And it is a lasting, perennial joy. In Miss Kingsley's book *Eversley Gardens* occurs this praise of her sweet domain: 'For unlike other works of art, there is no finality in such a garden. The picture once painted, the statue once sculptured, it is finished. But the garden goes on growing as long as time and love of it shall last, each succeeding year adding some fresh touch to the beautiful conception, and this Garden of Delight never fails in fresh surprises.' How suggestive is this of the soul growing in spiritual wisdom and understanding, in the knowledge and love of God, in the beauty of holiness! There is a morality that resembles the picture once painted, the statue once sculptured; ecclesiastical morality, like that of the Pharisees; calculated morality, like that of the schools. Here all is formal, mechanical; it may soon be learned, and once learned is final. But the righteousness of God is a living thing. Unlike statue or picture, it has no finality; like a garden, it goes on growing whilst life and love of it shall last, each season adding to its charm, whilst it never fails in fresh surprises, and time does not breathe on its fadeless bloom.

X

THE CONQUEST OF INVIDIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE

And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in dry places, and make strong thy bones; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.—Isa. lviii. 11.

If our intellectual and spiritual welfare is the main end of life, it must often appear as though the multitude was badly placed, as though indeed a large section of it was exceedingly unfortunate. In great cities the nature of the employments, the mean streets, the squalid surroundings of the masses seem directly inimical to their higher nature. Really, the rustic scene is little better, if it is at all. The gay flowers, the golden corn, the lily-sprinkled meadows, cannot effectually hide the many coarsening associations of peasant life. And not only is the environment depressing, but well-nigh everything pertaining to the calling and experience of these people appears belittling. The grey lot is relieved by few sparkles of poetry or gleams of romance; practically they are strangers to great literature or art; only for a privileged hour do thousands steal a glimpse of mountain, forest, or sea; and to them the very heavens are obscured by clouds of dust and smoke.

How can we, then, expect that men and women thus situated should attain to nobleness and saintliness, or acquire and exhibit fine qualities? Everything seems calculated to deny such expectations, and to induce us to conclude that the mediocrity

of environment would be reflected in mediocrity of character. And the worst of the case is that when we find ourselves in unpromising situations we so readily adopt the pessimistic view, and on this ground excuse our inferiority of character, our faintness, dullness, joylessness. It seems almost logical to infer that the unsatisfactoriness of our higher life is a necessary consequence of a secular life destitute of inspiration and opportunity. How important, then, that we be on our guard against this insidious error, and keep steadily in view our just relation to circumstance! And how inspiring to remember not only that we be able to withstand adverse circumstance, but actually to extort from it the enhancement of our highest self!

Dr. Croll writes strongly on the influence of climate upon whatever comes within its range. 'The flora and fauna of a district are determined mainly by the character of the climate, and not by the nature of the soil, or the conformation of the ground. It is from difference of climate that tropical life differs so much from Arctic, and both these from the life of temperate regions. It is climate, and climate alone, that causes the orange and the vine to blossom, and the olive to flourish in the South, but denies them to the North, of Europe. It is climate, and climate alone, that enables the forest tree to grow on the plain, but not on the mountain top; that causes wheat and barley to flourish on the mainland of Scotland, but not on the steppes of Siberia.'[1] Such is the absolutism of climate, pure and simple. Yet, if climate counts for so much, and the nature of the soil for so little, in relation to vegetation, the environment becomes less despotic in relation to animal life, for the naturalist discovers that 'there is in many creatures an extraordinary defiance

[1] *Climate and Time.*

of circumstances—a refusal to admit handicaps.' And Dr. Thomson points out an illuminating fact when he tells us that 'in the higher plants, as in the higher animals, there seems to be relatively greater freedom from the direct grip of environment.'[1]

Rising to the plane of natural, rational life, we find that although the external world does greatly influence human character and destiny, there is nevertheless in the life of the race a still larger freedom from the grip of environment. The external is no longer the main factor. All history is a record of the revolt of the spirit against the sovereignty of circumstance, and of the victories of the human will in the gigantic conflict; the enduring interest and fascination of history is found in this fact. The whole fabric of civilization testifies to the power of the mind in moulding obstinate circumstance to the ideal. How much we owe to men of spirit who refused to capitulate to poverty, hardship, hostility, and misfortune! But it is only when we come to consider our moral and spiritual experience that we understand how complete is our conquest of invidious circumstance. The New Testament knows nothing of the advantage of position, and never congratulates the believer upon having secured a pleasant place or a goodly heritage; it occupies itself wholly with the interior life, with the inspiration of the power that avails to save and perfect, whatever may be the difficulty of the situation. According to Christian teaching, it is rather the quality of the soil than the climate that makes the spiritual wastes to rejoice and the moral deserts to blossom as the rose.

In the intellectual world the reality and transcendence of genius—that is, of inward, inborn power—is

[1] *The Biology of the Seasons.*

universally acknowledged. The famous pictures of J. F. Millet were painted in a cold, damp room, without a fireplace and lighted by one little window, all his accessories, mediums, and instruments being of the humblest. Yet in this depressing outhouse, with the chill of poverty in his bones, rarely a gleam of success to cheer him, he created those masterpieces for which nations contend. Artists of another order require a comfortable atelier, studied lights, delicate tools, and purest colours; and even then fail of fame. Why did Millet with all his disadvantages achieve such extraordinary distinction? The answer springs to every lip: Because it was *in* him! These exceptional men excel by virtue of a gift none can explain. They are born with a mysterious, divine faculty which enables them to reach perfection without requiring the co-operation of circumstance—nay, in the teeth of it. The piercing perception, the rich imagination, the firm hold of truth, the magic touch delicately obedient to the vision, render the artist independent of accidents of place, season, material, and instrument. What genius is to the artist the grace of the Lord Jesus is to the saint. In His conversation with the woman at the well our Lord gave vivid expression to the central principle of His faith—the reality and sufficiency of the inward life. 'Everyone that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life' (John iv. 13, 14). Fullness of spiritual power issuing from the heart, hallowing all channels, overflowing all barriers with streams of blessing—this is the promise of the gospel.

Our Lord teaches His disciples that worldly

conditions are of slight significance; the highest rewards of His kingdom are offered to and are attainable by all sorts and conditions of men. The scenery is nothing, the difficulties or facilities of the path are nothing, the fare with which he meets is nothing; the abounding strength of the pilgrim is the one essential thing. Other teachers are copious concerning conditions, and meticulous in their instructions as to what one ought to seek or shun in secular and social life; but our Lord practically ignores the whole matter, and trusts the solution of the problem to the energy of the soul. The apostles follow the cue. 'According to the power that worketh in us' is the refrain of St. Paul. What he desires for his converts is not that the lines may fall to them in pleasant places, but that they may be 'strengthened ("made powerful," marg.) with all power, according to the might of His glory . . . bearing fruit unto every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God' (Col. i. 10). After that, the stage, its properties, and the part they play on it are no longer of absorbing consequence. In the sundry brief advices which he tenders to the members of the churches respecting their domestic and social relations, their employment and status, the locality in which they find themselves, the circumstances of their case generally, all is viewed as a matter of prudence and convenience, never as an essential and a decisive factor. 'Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called. Wast thou called being a bond-servant? Care not for it: but if thou canst become free, use it rather. . . . Brethren, let each man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God' (1 Cor. vii. 20-24). If the force, fire, and freshness of the soul be maintained; if faith, love, and hope abound, however the outward life shapes itself,

it may serve the spirit, and whatever befalls in earthly fortune may become an enriching discipline.

'Very wonderful is the adaptation of desert plants to their extremely difficult conditions. In the deserts, as of Africa and Arabia, all the vegetation that exists has to maintain itself for some nine months in the year without a drop of rain. Many plants are, however, provided with means of storing water within their tissues; others have salt-secreting glands which absorb the heavy dews of summer, and convey the moisture to the interior of the plant. When we look with the microscope into the structure of the tissue of desert plants, we find innumerable features which prove that they are as much cared for under the conditions in which they live as the finest palm-tree or oak in more favoured places. The humblest moss and the scrubbiest desert plant show marvellous structures in perfect adaptation to their respective wants, and are fitted to survive in their acrid homes.'[1] He who thus constituted the desert plant, who made of it a 'bundle of adaptations,' so that it braves burning suns and scorching blasts by reason of its secret refreshments, surprising the wilderness with its splendid blossoms, can also succour the soul in desolate places, causing it to abound in heavenly beauty and fruit. We who are embarrassed by religious opportunity often forget that numbers, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, are shut up to the fewest and crudest means of grace. Only at irregular intervals can they join in public worship; the fellowship of the saints is their rarest privilege; the teaching and communion open to them are meagre as well as scanty; and yet they retain their spirituality, renew their strength, and bear the fruits of righteousness

[1] Henslow, *Bible Plant-teaching*.

in their season. As the heath of the desert and the humblest moss survive in the austerest conditions, as well as the palm and oak in favoured places, so do sincere souls find refreshment in forlorn surroundings, and show forth the power and beauty of holiness where one would least expect. They illustrate the reality and efficacy of direct communion with God.

Are we not continually witnesses of this delightful fact? We discover the purest, largest, noblest character amid heart-breaking circumstance. In squalid streets, worn by vulgar toil, without a single redeeming feature of privilege, we may any day come into contact with men and women pure as snow, true as steel, good as gold. In the forecastle, the camp, the mine, in places and vocations whose atmosphere would seem directly to threaten refinement of any kind, we meet with those who charm and humble us by their excellence of spirit and conduct. Personally they form a perfect contrast to the sphere in which they spend their days. With the slenderest aids great men in every generation have made wonderful discoveries, wrought imperishable works, achieved famous victories; and in every generation simple souls by living near to God have, whilst almost entirely devoid of any external immunity or incitement, grown sublime. Just as in Nature we sometimes see what wonderful effects the divine power can produce by a spark of fire, a grain of dust, a phantom film, a passing breath, so in a higher sphere we see how the God of all grace can with the strictest economy of circumstance and ceremony bring forth saints of unsurpassable moral splendour. Indeed, it often seems as though moral intensity decreased as opportunities and encouragements multiply, whilst paucity of privilege intensifies zeal and adds to

character unwonted lustre. Fuseli complained concerning art students, 'As the conveniences and instruments of study increase, so will also the exertions of the students decrease.' Strange that it should be so; yet it appears too often the case alike in intellectual and moral education. All the virtues are found in wilderness places—kindness, temperance, faithfulness, unselfishness, purity.

In Brazilian forests no objects are said to be so striking as the orchids. To give an idea of the beauty and splendid colourings of these flowers resort must be had to coloured plates, and even then but a faint idea of their magnificent appearance in their native sites can be given. Yet some of the most beautiful grow in forests so gloomy that they often escape notice, and it is surprising that they flourish where they get so little light. So in dim and sordid scenes we welcome with surprise shining examples of integrity, tenderness, and sacrifice, of simple and sublime goodness, not to be excelled by any instances of cloistered virtue. We may well believe that these saints often escape notice; and it is marvellous how they flourish in such gloom; but as the sun acts where it does not shine, so the Spirit of health and holiness operates secretly in the souls of the humble, although without visible signs of His presence and influence. 'The light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness overcame it not' (John i. 5, R.V. marg.).

We have long been familiar with the diatribes of poet and aesthete against the industrialism responsible for spoliation of beautiful scenery. The railway and colliery, the factory, furnace and forge, the chemical works and potteries, are denounced because they darken the sky, blight the forest, defile the rivulet, scare the lark and nightingale, and turn

the green and pleasant land into a ghastly wilderness. All of which is plausible enough; only there is another side, and a truer. Whatever may be said of the glory of Nature, the meaning of the earth is man; and it may well be that occasion will arise when the former must be more or less sacrificed in the interests of the latter. The ugliness, uncleanness, and unhappiness of a great city may seem a poor exchange for the delight of spring and the pageantry of summer, for the fragrance of the flower and the splendour of the butterfly; but the real significance of the pandemonium is not all at once apparent. We go on repeating, 'God made the country, man the town'; but God made both, and on the latter His eye and heart are chiefly fixed. 'When He made firm the skies above; when the fountains of the deep became strong: when He gave to the sea its bound: when He marked out the foundations of the earth: then I, Wisdom, was by Him, as a master workman: and I was daily His delight; rejoicing in His habitable earth; and my delight was with the sons of men' (Prov. viii. 28–31). In the murky roaring, crowded city the supreme purpose of the Most High is being most fully accomplished in the discipline of souls, the production of righteous character, the evolution of strong and beautiful lives. In the moral issues of the complex and troubled life of the million is to be sought the ultimate reason for the existence and government of the world, and the adequate justification of all that is. When *we* contemplate the city we find cause chiefly for satire or sorrow, but He, who seeth not as man seeth, beholds the three thousand faithful ones where we see only one in the mirror; and in the tested virtues of the obscure multitude He recognizes a glory and worth

beyond all the grandeur of mountains, the purity of seas, the charm of landscapes, and the flowers of the field. It were a sin wantonly to set foot on a daisy, but the goodness of the humble worked out in the stress and strain of common life is of sublimer moment than all the glories of matter. To be one in the unknown throng, subject to all the intricate and wonderful discipline of life, is a prerogative that may satisfy the most ambitious.

Let none, then, repine at their station, wasting time in longing for other things than such as they have, greater things and more congenial, or things of apparently superior promise. The scale of our stewardship may be small, its items meagre, the situation obscure, the duty involved, insipid, and irksome, yet in the discharge of the obvious duties of our calling, wherever and whatever it may be, lies all the possibilities of the soul. Our consuming solicitude should be that we grasp the circumstances of the hour, learn their lesson, apprehend whatever they promise of knowledge and strength. Then the rudest lot will not prejudice any more than the uncouth shell of the oyster injures the pearl which it only serves to fashion and protect. The eye may be grievously offended by the aspect of things, but the soul has secrets of its own by which it derives sublime nurture from the most ordinary opportunities and exercises. The roots of plants have a peculiar property known to botanists as 'selective capacity,' which enables them to find and absorb such substances in the soil as are essential to their growth, although these may exist in extremely minute quantity. Plants requiring lime will grow on granite which contains the least amount of lime. Seaweeds absorb from sea-water sufficient phosphorus—one of the

essential elements to the life of all plants—though the amount of phosphorus in sea-water is so excessively small that it is quite impossible to estimate it.[1] But think of the 'selective capacity' of the soul! How it draws the sap of reverence, gratitude, wisdom, courage, beauty, from sites, material, and events apparently destitute of all moral value whatever! The great body of the saints trudges along the common highway gathering at every step dust of spiritual gold, where the carnal eye discerns only the dismal, the contemptible, the painful.

Do we always apprehend the serious nature of our fretfulness? We often think that we are finding fault with men when in fact we are complaining against God. Moses said to the people in the wilderness, 'The Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against Him: and what are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord' (Exod. xvi. 8). We are often open to the same reproach. The things that vex are in Nature, in the order of Providence, ah! even in the purposes of grace. Analyse the murmur, and it proves a criticism of God rather than of friends, masters, leaders, governments. Let us beware lest we come into the catalogue of Jude, 'These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their lusts' (16). And what is the justification of our dissatisfaction? Have we forgotten that the end of the divine government is not to make us comfortable, but to make us pure? Are we satisfied that we have so improved past opportunities that we merit something better? Are we not overlooking the majesty and mercy of the least of God's gifts and appointments? Thinkers are never more filled with wonder than when they contemplate the 'leasts' of His works, and shall

[1] Arber, *Plant Life in Alpine Switzerland.*

not we when we recall the least of His mercies? Oh the wonderful patience and longsuffering of God!

Appreciate your present situation, whatever it may be. Forbes Robinson writes a friend, 'I hate the unsettled feeling that I have not yet begun my main work.' Contentment with our present place and work is the truest wisdom and an immense gain. 'And the Lord shall guide thee continually.' If it pleases Him to change the situation, all well and good; but in the meantime our present work may be our main work, and for the high purposes of life by no means as unfriendly as we suppose. We seriously defraud ourselves by this endless quarrel with our surroundings, fretting for something we fancy more worthy of us, something of more manifest importance. It is we who ought to be important, and nothing is more calculated to make us so than faithfulness to present duty. God leads His children aright. Golden and purple fruits not rarely grow best in stubborn soils, and He makes no mistake when plants of His right-hand planting are assigned an arid patch. Fit yourself where you find yourself by cheerful diligence for whatever station you may think best, trusting heaven to open up to you that better lot. Do not waste life in coveting what cannot be obtained. Give an intimate application to Whittier's song:

> He who wanders widest lifts
> No more of beauty's jealous veils
> Than he who from his doorway sees
> The miracle of flowers and trees.

Our main care must be to maintain in vigour our spiritual life. The world that presses upon us, threatening to belittle and befoul, becomes formidable only when we allow the spiritual element in our personal

life to decline ; then it is that circumstance narrows, degrades, destroys. So long as an active spiritual imagination is preserved enabling us to see the real nature and greatness of apparently insignificant circumstance, and the spiritual energy is cherished which defies a corrupting environment, we are secure, triumphant, progressive ; the danger sets in when the integrity of the soul ceases. By meditation, worship, and the daily study of the sacred page, let us renew our spiritual strength and vision, and the monotonies of life shall not dull our fervour, its vulgar tasks coarsen our spirit, nor its impurities tempt or stain. ' In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the mirage shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water ' (Isa. xxxv. 6, 7).

XI

THE CHIEF JOY

Rejoice in the Lord alway : again I will say, Rejoice.—PHIL. iv. 4.

To attain and preserve a deep satisfaction in life we must first believe in the goodness of God, and that it is His good pleasure that we share His blessedness. Various kinds and degrees of happiness are possible without religious faith, but to realize true and abiding serenity we must apprehend the goodness of the Lord underlying all life, ordering it, satisfying it. Ample warrant is forthcoming to justify such a faith. Nature often perplexes us, yet we cannot resist the fact that her fundamental thought is beneficent. As the apostles reminded the people of Lystra, 'And yet He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness' (Acts xiv. 17). Human nature testifies to the same fact. Pessimism has never been the popular creed ; Oriental nations are supposed to hold it, yet we soon discover that the doctrine of the sadness and hopelessness of life is a theory of philosophers and poets, rather than the practical belief of the multitude. It is surprising that it should be so, considering the afflictions of the race and the general disposition to magnify our miseries ; but our cheerfulness is constitutional and irrepressible. The instinctive optimism of the many prevails against the reasoned pessimism of the few.

The innate trend to joyousness is sometimes revealed

in pathetic ways. A traveller on the Amazon writes: 'At the time of our visit, this town has twenty-eight native inhabitants, of whom four suffer from chronic rheumatism, eight from old age and arterio-sclerosis, one from hernia, one from erysipelas, and seven from chronic malaria. Bread, matches, and sugar are not obtainable at any price, yet four people make a living making fireworks! The fireworks are used for their festivals.'[1] But we need not go so far afield for instances of this inextinguishable cheerfulness; we constantly see in our own midst a native joyousness asserting itself in the most miserable circumstances. Human nature will not be denied its birthright of gladness; its faith and hope survive all tragedies; despite outrageous fortune, its incurable belief remains that it has a right to be happy; we illumine the abyss of our wretchedness with festal lights, and garnish the memorials of our sorrows with flowers; and we may rely upon it that the persistent instinct testifies to the gracious character and design of Him who implanted it.

Revelation agrees with the constitution of things, assuring us of our heirship to a joyous inheritance. Schopenhauer flouts the Old Testament on account of its optimism; but 'the joy of the Lord' was the secret of Israel's solidarity and persistence, and the sad philosopher perceived how this fact told against his philosophy. Lawgiver, psalmist, and prophet alike give utterance to a radiant hope in God and in His goodwill to all His creatures; the New Testament is still more emphatic, assuring the struggling race of its call to conquest, glory, and peace. The rainbow is round about the Bible, as it is round about the Throne; its sweet colours tinge every sacred page,

[1] Lange, *The Lower Amazon*.

even the saddest and sternest. To 'rejoice in the Lord' is not only the privilege of the righteous; it is their duty also.

Yet whilst the good pleasure of God is clearly manifest, how many of His children remain in heaviness! They fail to realize His goodness, are not alive to the beauty and preciousness of the heavenly gifts, do not open their heart to the comforts of the Holy Ghost and the strong consolation of their glorious hope; or, if they do enter into their privilege, it is only faintly and intermittent; and the natural result of such hesitancy is that they lack the holy cheerfulness that is the strength of life. Sir James Stephen writes to a friend: 'Saints who have mortified themselves to the quick are to be met with in every collection of ecclesiastical worthies. But how few who have enjoyed themselves to the utmost! How few elevated enough to believe that such joy would be acceptable to God!'[1] Pity, indeed, that the criticism is so true! Many are shy of the gladsome, suspect the gay thought, persuade themselves that they are safest when saddest; even when a radiant hour is thrust upon them, they contrive to make it 'counterfeit a gloom'; and in Christian biographies it is noteworthy that when the subject was distinguished by a streak of wit and humour the biographer feels it necessary to interpose a delicate apology for the human frailty and blemish. We are not sufficiently 'elevated' to believe that such mirthfulness can be acceptable to God.

How is this unfortunate fact to be explained, and how shall we best avoid this fault? It is of immense importance that our religion should make us personally happy, and that the Church of God should reflect and diffuse the eternal sunshine. The sadness of a saint

[1] *Life and Letters*, p. 108.

breeds doubts as to the rationality of his faith. A merry laugh is said to be rare with the Mohammedans, and that is not the least argument against the merit of their creed; yet the Christian faith may often be doubted on the same score. Every article of our creed proposes our happiness, and we do ourselves and our religion injustice by permitting and cherishing anything like a prevailing gloom and apprehensiveness. Let us, then, glance at some of the causes of this anomaly, and see wherein lies the remedy.

1. The recollection of *fault and failure* is not unusually the occasion of our unhappiness. We are accustomed to speak of the 'dead past'; but the past is often far from being dead; much to our grief it seems ever ready with a skeleton for the feast, a spectre for our pillow. We boast of rising 'on stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things'; yet quite as often there is a reverse movement, and on those stepping-stones we descend to gloomy crypts of bitter regret, cruel self-reproach, remorse, and something like despair. And with our remembrance of 'old sins' is the acute consciousness of fresh error and condemnation. The classic example for this situation, and of the conduct appropriate to it, are set forth in the Book of Nehemiah (viii. 9–13). The reading of the law awoke the conscience of the people, and, alive to their infidelity and sin, they were overwhelmed with sorrow. But their enlightened leader did not permit distress to degenerate into the sorrow that worketh death. He caused them to remember the Lord their God, long-suffering, abundant in goodness, delighting in mercy. Trusting in the divine graciousness, they took heart again; their sorrow was turned into joy, and with both hands they rebuilt the city. Despair builds nothing, but the joy of forgiveness and hope inspired

the heroic spirit that was needed to meet the exacting situation. The sorrow that loses sight of the divine compassion paralyses and poisons all life.

How slow of heart we are to believe, really to believe, in the divine mercy! Is there a more striking proof of our moral imperfection than this hesitancy to believe in the freeness and richness of the divine grace, although its Author has taken infinite pains to convince us of it? Some of the backward races are found utterly incapable of appreciating disinterested kindness; they construe it as disguised diplomacy, as a mark of mental weakness, or as an expression of fear. Knowing nothing themselves of magnanimous sentiment, they cannot understand it in others or believe in it, they lack the sense that makes it intelligible. Does not this fact cast light on our mistrust in the clemency of God? We seem incapable of entertaining the thought of His vast love, and it seems next to impossible for Him to overcome our incredulity. The true explanation is that our nature has so suffered from the blight of sin and selfishness that it is difficult to believe in love, and the love of the Cross baffles us altogether; we cannot grasp it, cannot lay hold upon it. We go on reciting the grand article of our creed, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins,' and immediately proceed to lacerate ourselves by the memory of our sins, as though such forgiveness were only a fugitive fancy. Instead of accepting the pardoning love as too grand to be false, we act as if it were too grand to be true. If we believe in anything, we may surely believe that the grace which cures us of our sin forgives it.

As the Spirit of God continues to work within the spirit of the race, and love more and more prevails in the human heart, will not men rise to a nobler

conception of God, and trust more readily and firmly in His all-sufficient grace? Growing more familiar with affection in all social relations, proving by daily experience its riches of forbearance, forgiveness, and sacrifice, will they not get clearer insight and firmer confidence in the Eternal Love? Will not this be a chief glory of the latter days? In the past, largely arising out of the infirmity of undisciplined humanity, the 'God of all grace' has been misunderstood, mistrusted, counted a 'hard man,' the very tokens of His compassion harshly construed, as some heathen people look upon the rainbow as a sign of wrath; but in the better days to come this distorted vision will cease, and the patience, clemency, and hopefulness of God be recognized as never before. What a delightful world when no cloud any longer obscures the love of God!

2. *Temperament* is a factor in our moods, and one of no slight importance. And let us write down this as a guiding maxim, that the sunny temperament is the ideal one. 'I never knew any one with such a gift for happiness as my mother has,' writes Leslie Stephen. Choice gift indeed! Whoever possesses it in any high degree needs few other gifts. Quick to discern the preciousness and blessedness of all desirable things, equally alive to the compensatory aspects of painful experiences, and hopeful always for the best even when the outlook is far from clear, they who possess and wisely exercise this gift live lives full of wonder, gratitude, and praise. But all born of women have not this grace. Victor Cherbuliez thus describes one of his characters: 'He lacked that lightness of humour which, of all things in the world, is the least easy to acquire. His gravity was inborn; he took everything seriously, his wine

never sparkled.' These sombre souls detect drawbacks in the best gifts of life. The sight of the thorn makes faint the fragrance of the rose, the shining hour is deprecated as it may bring the wasp, and their heart has ceased to leap up at the spectacle of the rainbow since they learned of its seamy side; the real sorrows of life are exaggerated by brooding, and many imaginary ones are added, whilst the trend of events always receives the worst interpretation. To the pessimistic and pensive all life takes a sober colour, leaves a more or less bitter taste. It is of little use to inquire into the origin of temperament; that remains unknown except to Him who 'imparts the secret bias of the soul'; but the bias is there. Constitutionally we give life a brighter or darker interpretation, and in certain respects the results of temperament are inevitable.

We must not, however, forget that native disposition is subject to control and discipline; we may, perhaps, say that temperamental qualities are as amenable to culture as our mental faculties are. Vinet observes that 'the art of being happy was with Fontenelle a talent.' All the godly should cultivate this art, and none more so than the grave spirits whose natural gift for happiness is not brilliant. Unfortunately the contrary is commonly the case. Those who are prone to self-analysis, doubtful of things, easily dejected, too often follow a course that confirms and intensifies the saturnine temper. They encourage the mood, feed it, fondle and pamper it, find ingenious reasons for excusing it, until in the end they come to believe that piety is 'divinest melancholy'; it becomes a habit and a necessity; they do all the journey with the downcast look. Let us not forget for an hour that the contented temper,

the heroic cheerfulness, the hopeful outlook, constitute the Christian ideal; and for its realization let us strive and pray. We acknowledge the seriousness of life, but seriousness is not sadness. Times of exhaustion and depression are wellnigh inevitable to all, as at certain seasons the musical birds seem to lose their brightest faculties and lapse into sickness and silence; but as such loss is only temporary with them, the sweet minstrels soon regaining their song, so let us by the power of the Spirit resist the gathering gloom and press into the sunshine. 'Behold, it was for my peace that I had great bitterness' (Isa. xxxviii. 17).

3. A *morbid sensitiveness* seriously impairs the Christian peace. That we should be on our guard against the encroachments of evil is well understood, but hyper-sensitiveness is an evil in itself to be feared. Chapman, in his *Unexplored Spain,* indulges in a reflection that is not without its moral for the saints: 'One marvels at the extreme caution displayed by wild animals. Here is a young stag coming straight along, down wind, and in a desolate spot which to human sense could betray absolutely no feature or taint of danger. Suddenly he becomes rigid, arrested in mid-career—sniffing at a pure, untainted air, yet conscious somehow of something wrong somewhere! It is a miraculous gift, though one cannot but feel grateful that we humans are devoid of senses that ever keep nerves in highest tension.'

But some of our fellows cannot be congratulated on this exemption. So far as the natural life is concerned, we never lack alarmists who are ever busy pointing out danger where it was never seen before. Articles of food, apparently the most innocent, are suspected: the tomato favours cancer, the potato

is the cause of physical and moral degradation, and there was good reason why the apple was forbidden the primitive pair. 'To die of a rose in aromatic pain' has long been accounted delicate satire, but now we are gravely assured that the narcissus is the means of spreading influenza. Flowers should be kept out of houses and churches, and children not allowed to handle them. These things, and a thousand others, are tabooed in the interest of health and safety. People of a certain temperament accept all this; they move with tormenting caution, fearing where no fear is. As a brilliant Frenchman puts it, 'When we look for poison we find it everywhere.' Yet this is precisely what many of us are intent on doing in the spiritual life, keeping our nerves in highest tension. Obsessed by a sense of life's danger, we live in painful apprehension, scenting peril in everything, specially in what is naturally desirable. For example, a hymn declares that we 'trembling taste our food'; and we may infer that whatever else concerns us is to be treated with similar jealousy. Such a mood of solicitude renders a serene and smiling life impossible.

Let us regard this moral supersensitiveness as partaking of the nature of disease. It occupies rather a considerable place in the biography of some saints—too considerable a place, for it has really no scriptural sanction whatever. When Isaiah writes of those who 'tremble at the word of the Lord,' he was not thinking of terror-stricken slaves, but of susceptible and responsive souls. When St. Paul exhorts the Philippians, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling' (ii. 12, 13), the context makes it plain that they were not to do this in painful suspense, but with confidence and exultation, 'for it is God which worketh in you both to will and

to work, for His good pleasure.' It is not less than a superstition that we should live in chilling fear of delectable things. The primitive Christians who 'day by day . . . did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people' (Acts ii. 46, 47), should be our example whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do. Even the pagan may set us an example, for, as travellers tell us, 'the Japanese seem to make every meal a pic-nic.' The mood of happiness is protective; there is a saving salt in every pure joy; placing our whole trust in God's love and guardianship, we are immune whatever may be the dangerousness of life. 'For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline' (2 Tim. i. 7).

4. The joyousness of life is liable to suffer through *untoward circumstance.* Events fall out so unpropitiously that privation and pain seem to render the radiant mood impossible. A winter of misfortune overtakes us, freezing the genial current of the soul; the singing birds lie silent in the snow; the chance gleams of sunshine only lengthen the icicles. When these trying days dawn, the children of God should remember that their peace and joy are not dependent on material affluence. In an early letter to a friend, Victor Hugo writes: 'I am eagerly awaiting the time which will settle my future, and enable me to live and be happy. So many material circumstances are often necessary for the realization of the purest and most ideal of dreams.' This is hardly the view of revelation. There we learn that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses, neither are they necessary to reach the purest and most exalted ideals. The

old prophet understood this, and expresses it exactly. 'For though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation' (Hab. iii. 17, 18).

As the peace of the soul is not dependent upon material resources, it is not banished by their curtailment or withdrawal. Much of the New Testament is devoted to the illustration of this truth. Indeed, the whole life of our Lord was an illustration of His teaching, that the highest life and the sublimest joy may be realized apart from happy circumstance. And every thoughtful reader of the gospel will be struck by the fact that as the Master's career passed into deeper darkness His joy seemed to increase. He never talked so freely of peace and joy as He did in the last sad days. 'Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you, (John xiv. 27). 'These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled' (xv. 11). 'And ye therefore now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh away from you' (xvi. 22). 'But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves' (xvii. 13). Would it not be our wisdom in sad days, instead of making our brain ache in attempting to solve the problems that first make our heart ache, to get closer to the Master and know His more intimate fellowship? He would reveal to us the secret of finding true peace at the centre of the whirlwind, heavenly joy at the heart of the flame. 'And they said one to another, Was not our heart

burning within us, while He spake to us in the way?' (Luke xxiv. 32).

It is necessary to keep in mind the fact that Christian joy, the true, essential joy, is not to be confounded with the happiness of which the natural man speaks, and which is so largely based on material advantage. It is of another quality, possesses a more sovereign virtue, springs from a higher source. It is not contingent on natural conditions; they are determined by it. It sanctifies and enhances all sensuous pleasures, whilst existing apart from them and often blooming triumphantly in their absence. St. Paul wrote from a prison, with the chain on his wrist, his daring, magnificent challenge, 'Rejoice in the Lord alway: again I will say, Rejoice' (Phil. iv. 4). He could not rejoice in himself, not in liberty, wealth, or fame, but he could now and always rejoice in the fellowship of his Master. There is no really true joy except it is in some measure a spiritual satisfaction; and the full, habitual, perennial satisfaction of the soul is found in the knowledge, love, and service of the Lord. After that, the more or less of sensuous pleasure is not of vital consequence.

Sir Martin Conway wrote from Polar regions: 'Now that the short northern summer has set in, flowers were opening on all sides. A veritable Arctic garden surrounded the tents, for the ground was gay with blossom. . . . It was strange to meet again in this remote region so many plants that I had found by the glaciers and amongst the crags of the Karakoram Himalaya. . . . Here they all were again, as bright, and maintaining themselves as happily in the heart of the Arctic regions as on the backbone of Asia.' As the explorer found the identical strong bright flowers in widely sundered regions, so St. Paul found equal satisfactions and possibilities in the most strongly contrasted

latitudes of circumstance. 'I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want' (Phil. iv. 12). He had compassed the many varieties and extremes of situation, but the grace that was in him equalized them all, and turned to advantage the most unpromising. In inhospitable realms of ostracism, hardship, and captivity he found once more purity's whitest lily, humility's sweetest violet, joy's greenest palm, love's reddest rose, with every precious fruit of light; here they all were again in the heavenly sunshine, 'as bright and maintaining themselves as happily' in slums and jails as in the days when his pathway led him through green pastures and by waters of rest, and where the plants of grace throve all was well.

XII

THE TABLE-LANDS OF THE PERFECTED LIFE

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ : even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love.—Eph. i. 3, 4.

The beginning of the Christian life is an uplift, and the road to perfection leads uphill all the way. Yet there are possible halting-places where the soul may make its abode, shrinking from the toil of climbing yet higher. It is on these loftier plateaux that the apostle's thought ranges in this Epistle, and to them he directs our gaze. Five times he writes of life in Christ as dwelling in 'the heavenlies,' by which term he means a life of transcending perfection and blessedness. Let us, then, inquire, first, what is this highest life ; and, then, ask what it implies and promises.

I. What the Highest Life Is.—In a word it signifies a sincere attempt to reduce the Christian creed to experience and practice ; to strive to be and to do whatever our faith demands, falling short in nothing of its requirements. It means that we love God with 'all our mind, and soul, and strength.' Whosoever aspires to the ideal life must be able to say with St. Paul, 'I have been crucified with Christ ; yet I live ; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me' (Gal. ii. 20). The law of Christ determines the whole programme of life, and the love of Christ becomes

the effectual motive to universal obedience ; they who will be perfect must be one with Him as the branch is one with the vine, not as the mistletoe which finds shallow rootage in a crevice, or as the ivy or orchid that takes precarious hold by a tendril. To live the higher life is to possess the mind of Christ, to reflect His image, to walk in His steps. Or, to put it from another point of view, which is not another : only as the Holy Spirit dwells richly in our hearts, illuminating, energizing, hallowing, can we reach the shining heights, where it is good to dwell with the Master, to see His glory, and to be changed into the same image. 'The Spirit of truth . . . He shall glorify Me ; for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you' (John xvi. 13, 14). The prize of life is the perfection of our being, which implies that we realize the immense resources of the soul, accomplish our high calling in all its duties and privileges, enjoy the sense of liberty and delight arising from purified and harmonized faculties, and that we are capable of, and ripe for, the great inheritance awaiting the faithful. The highest life is to carry out this sacred and sublime trust with a pure and constant enthusiasm, making the thought of godliness the ruling idea of the mind, the master-passion of the heart, the supreme law of conduct and action.

It will be readily seen that all this means something beyond, often far indeed beyond, the level on which many are content to live. No merely conventional life, no merely professional life, is suggested ; but the Christian life in earnest, in entire self-surrender, in perfect freedom, in habitual felicity. Parry tells that when the sun at last arises upon the polar world the consequence is not exactly so pleasing as might have been expected ; it is long after its reappearance in those regions before there is much power in its beams. The

thermometer rises slowly; much wearisomeness and impatience are experienced; only later does the summer break forth with its warmth and flowers. The first stages of the Christian life have their special constraints, conflicts, reactions, and disappointments; and it largely depends upon ourselves how long the perfect noon and summer of the soul are delayed. Some seem never to get beyond those initial stages, and to remain to the end knowing little of the spontaneity, beauty, and felicity of a fully consecrated life. Spurgeon is reported to have said, 'There is a point in grace as much above the ordinary Christian as the ordinary Christian is above the worldling.' This can hardly be the case. The ordinary Christian, if a true one, is at an immeasurable distance beyond the unconverted, whilst no such distance can separate the saints. Yet the distance may be immense. That saintly man, Forbes Robinson, who had retired to St. Moritz for the sake of his health, writes to a friend: 'I feel a new man now in the fresh mountain air. If I always lived here I might be good for something. What a parable of life! If we could live in the higher world and breathe in its air, what strong, healthy men we should be! I stayed a night once with Westcott, and it seemed to me that he lived and moved and had his being in a higher region, to which I now and then came as a stranger, and he could see habitually, what I sometimes saw, the way of God in human life. I am sure we are meant to have our home in that higher world, and that we only see life sanely, steadily, and in its true proportions when we view it from that vantage-ground.' Humboldt relates that when standing upon an elevation of 14,471 feet above the level of the sea, the condor soared at such a height above his head that it appeared only as a black speck. The writer of the above letter

lived on a high table-land, and yet saw Westcott on eagles' wings far above him.

II. What This Elevation of Soul Implies and Promises.

1. *Enlargement of vision.* Living on lower grades of spiritual life, we find it difficult to grasp the great articles of our creed, and were it not for the rare moments which come in the poorest lives we might lose our hold of them altogether. Public attention has more than once been directed to dangers threatening Greenwich Observatory. This institution stands on a hill 150 feet high, but chimneys 250 feet high rise from the river-bed above the domes of the Observatory, and interfere with the observation of certain stars; whilst the disturbance occasioned by the hot air and smoke discharged by these stacks causes serious trouble to the astronomer. Is not this a metaphor of the danger to our faith and peace by remaining on the more depressed levels of life? Living so nearly to the worldly, how many things intrude upon us and obscure the great truths by which we live! Soon they are only dimly seen; and when no longer vividly realized, how easy it is to deny them! Very different is the case when we live near to God. The Lick Observatory, on Mount Hamilton, California, standing on ground 4,000 feet high, is remote from all chimneys; it is nearer to the stars and beholds them with open vision. So to those who live on the higher ranges of thought, and feeling, and purpose, the great truths of revelation shine out with strong, commanding evidence. It is easy to see them, easy to believe them; they are as the stars of heaven for clearness. We believe 'because we must, by sight's compulsion.'

In the first chapter of this Epistle we find how fervently the apostle desired for his brethren a clearer

knowledge of the mighty truths which concerned them. 'Making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe' (16–19). In the third chapter the writer shows explicitly and emphatically how this knowledge is to be acquired. It is through reaching the heights of sanctified personality and experience that we get the vision and faculty divine. 'I bow my knees unto the Father . . . that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend . . . and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge' (14–19). In the whole of this Epistle St. Paul has ascended to the Alpine region, high white mountains on every side in unearthly glory; but in this passage he stands on Mount Blanc itself, exulting in a vast horizon, and feasting his spiritual imagination on wonder after wonder of grace and promise. The power of apprehension, comprehension, appreciation, discrimination, comes through loftiness and holiness of life; no way else. If we are to attain the vision splendid, we must stand where the apostle stood, realizing with him the power of the Spirit, the indwelling of Christ, the life of love, communion, and sacrifice.

As the higher life brings clearer vision of celestial

truths, so it enables us the better to understand the significance of our earthly life and discipline. Mark the passage in Forbes Robinson's letter just quoted, 'Westcott could see habitually, what I sometimes saw, the way of God in human life. I am sure we are meant to have our home in that higher world, and that we only see life sanely, steadily, and in its true proportions when we view it from that vantage-ground.' So far from habitual contemplation and devotion withdrawing attention from the present life and making us discontented with it, it explains life, reconciles us to it, supplies a key to the chequered story not otherwise acquired. As the prophetic gift or the divination of genius discerns the secret order and trend of things, so there is a spiritual clairvoyance by which the spiritual detect the mind and working of God in human history and in their own 'He made known His ways unto Moses' (Ps. ciii. 7), and takes into His confidence every one whose heart is perfect towards Him. To them life appears no longer an eddying stream of contingency, accident, and futility, a baffling chaos and painful puzzle; but, viewed from the vantage-ground of a higher world, they 'see life sanely, steadily, and in its true proportions,' as the programme of a wise and gracious Ruler.

> That Thou art nowhere to be found, agree
> Wise men, whose eyes are but for surfaces;
> Men with eyes opened by the second birth,
> To whom the seen, husk of the unseen is,
> Descry Thee soul of everything on earth.
> Who knows Thy ends, Thy means and motions see;
> Eyes made for glory soon discover Thee.

2. *A rarer degree of purity* is another implication of the highest life. 'He chose us in Him before the

foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love.' Long before that recent event, the palaeolithic period, in the counsels of eternity, God determined that all believers in Christ Jesus should become 'partakers of the divine nature,' so far as that is possible to a creature, reflecting the divine glory, knowing His peace. Every believer in Christ from the hour of spiritual birth receives this power and privilege. 'That ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth' (Eph. iv. 23, 24). Yet we may rest long in incompleteness, far from being without blemish; whereas by faith, resolution, and diligence we may grow in grace, and attain to the stature of men in Christ Jesus.

A naturalist writes: 'The Alpine garden does not contain any noxious growth. The higher we climb towards the sky, the sweeter and purer are the flowers. Is it a coincidence that the lower we descend towards the plain, the more frequent become the noxious growths, the stinging, blistering, foul-smelling, and thorny plants; and the higher we go to the clouds, the more virtue and beauty and fragrance we discover? No evil shall exist above the snow-line; there purity reigns.'[1] The Alpine garden is the figure of the realm to which we are called, the picture of where we ought to be, of what we ought to be. On the lower slopes of life are noxious things, stinging, blistering, defiling, for, alas, such things intrude even on the lower slopes of Beulah; but transcending these, the air has a wooing fragrance, the flowers are sweet, and still higher is the line which marks the abode of absolute purity. 'The heavenlies'

[1] Trevena, *Adventures Among Wild Flowers*.

which beckon us are states of stainless purity, unblemished beauty, and holiest joy.

An *interior perfection* is the first aim of one who would live the higher life. The training of the conscience becomes a primal duty. The conscience of a Christian may be a rude organ whose judgements are crude and unsafe, but climbing higher it is touched to finer issues. It is wonderful to what perfection the eye can be educated. Herschel thought that the workers on the mosaics of the Vatican could distinguish at least thirty thousand different shades of colour. It is equally surprising to what perfection the ear may be trained. Weber said that musicians can distinguish notes separated in the scale of sound by only one-sixtieth part of a musical tone. To what perfection, then, may not the conscience be raised! We are often struck by the majestic moral judgements of our Lord; their exquisite discrimination, their authority, instantaneousness, and unanswerableness, are most impressive. It is impossible to yield ourselves entirely up to God and to live to His glory without the conscience acquiring a sensitiveness, truthfulness, and sovereignty far excelling that of the natural man or low-grade Christian.

Into what masterliness may not the will be disciplined! So long as we do not live in the power of our religion, whenever a critical hour comes we hesitate, and too often fail. Instead of our determination being prompt and decisive, we fall into jeopardy through the faintness of the soul. At a period when Napoleon seemed irresistible it was said of him, 'He does not will, he is willed.' As if a resistless force called destiny worked in and through the great soldier. What was thought to be true in the case of the conqueror may be really so in the life of every individual

true to God. The will of the fully consecrated believer is so reinforced by the grace of God that he pursues the path of duty in the spirit of a conqueror. Where is the secret of his confidence and triumph? 'For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure' (Phil. ii. 13).

That our affections should be purged of all alloy is to be ardently desired, and they will be, if they are consistently set on things above, and not on things on the earth. When our Lord proclaimed the blessedness of the pure in heart, He was not uttering a counsel of unattainable perfection; such a heart was His own, and His mission was to create a copy of it in the breast of His every disciple. An investigation in Switzerland has shown that mortality caused by organic disease of the heart decreases as the altitude of the habitation rises. Is it not true that as we raise the ideal and tone of life, walking with God on high places, that the false motions of the heart are checked, its secret idolatries rebuked, its wanderings recalled, its waning fires relighted? So nothing in our whole nature ought to rest on a lower level of motive, principle, or design; 'all that is within us' ought to respond to the uplifting, transfiguring grace.

We must not forget that the reality of interior sanctification is evidenced by *excellence of character and conduct.* Out of profound spirituality ought to spring commanding practical goodness. We are told by the naturalist that on their native rocks and ledges Alpine flowers are specially rich and gorgeous. The deep blue of the gentians, as well as crimson, rich reds, purple, gold-yellow, and pure white, are scattered in lavish profusion. Lowland flowers when transferred to Alpine gardens at 6,000 feet become richer and deeper and more vivid in colour. The

reverse is equally true, for these mountaineers are neither so gorgeous nor so rich planted in the lowlands as on their native rocks and ledges; their colour fades, their glory is lost.[1] Is not this a parable of the graces of life as cultivated on the lowlands of experience, or on its mountain heights? We cannot define the beauty of character felt in sincere spiritually-minded people, as Forbes Robinson recognized in Westcott, any more than we can define other forms of beauty; yet it is undeniable that there is a singular charm of character in the genuine saint. We cannot live 'quite on the verge of heaven' without sharing in its beauty and sweetness.

A French art critic writes: 'Neither the refinements of elegance nor the refinements of intelligence are compatible with virtue.' A shopkeeper would certainly exact ready money from such a dainty customer. Revelation knows of no refinements incompatible with virtue; all the refinements perfections, transcendentalisms, on which it insists signify a severer and sublimer virtue. The saint is not to be known by a uniform or a shibboleth. Whatever verbal exposition of sanctification may be nearest to the fact, let us not forget that the final test of its nature and profession is ethical. 'What do ye more than others?' (Matt. v. 47). 'Every blessing in Christ Jesus' must produce an answering virtue. 'The weightier matters of the law' must be obeyed, and at the same time the details of duty express the divinest principles. Amid all the pomp of Sinai the neighbour's ass was not forgotten. And all practical goodness must be carried to a rare perfection. No other distinction is to be sought than that of fine behaviour. The Church long ago fell

[1] Scott-Elliot, *Botany of To-day.*

into the error of attempting to distinguish the Church within the Church by adopting a variety of arbitrary signs, but personal merit is the one sufficient sign of reality. All who are seeking honestly to work out the nobler ideal will be known by their fairness and honour, by their strength and gentleness, by their restraint, humility, reverence, magnanimity, and beneficence. Well said an old writer, 'Let those who would be singular be very virtuous.'

3. To attain the heights and dwell there implies a *perfected blessedness*. 'Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.' 'And Peter answered, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here' (Matt. xvii. 4). It is always good to be with Him, the meaner elements beneath our feet. No experience of initial discipleship is without its deep satisfaction—but ascending the hill of the Lord and dwelling in the holy place, we see more fully the glory of the Lord, and receive more richly of His fullness. 'The heavenly places' must be good to live in. All things there are pure and delightful. Professor Joly tells of the vast number of bees and butterflies that he noticed in the higher Alps. It would seem that they quit the pastures and dare the glaciers, lured by the rarer sweetness of the flowers growing on the higher reaches of the mountain. Another writer testifies, 'No Greek honey can match the luxury you get among the Sennereien of the higher Alps. The flowers that thrive along the meridian of the snows offer the most delicate pasture for fastidious bees.' Once more we see as in a glass the image of the spiritual truth. Slighting all inferior gratifications, renouncing all dubious compromises, giving himself wholly to the Lord, the believer realizes a blessedness that he never knew as a half-hearted disciple. With the nearer approach, the

closer communion, the full reliance of the heart in the promises of God and sincerest delight in the law of God, we find the restfulness and sweetness of which the psalmist sings so exultingly.

In this highest realm we most securely meet temptation. Whatever we may be, wherever we may stand, we are in nowise exempt from temptation; but it is the soundest wisdom to choose our own ground, and that the highest, on which to fight our battles. 'For, our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places' (Eph. vi. 12). A mysterious and terrible array, and yet one of whose existence and power we have least reason to doubt. Our advantage lies on the high places of the field. When the alien army debouches on celestial ground, it is at the utmost disadvantage. In the strong, clear light, how transparent become its disguises! Its braveries wax mean; its gold becomes mockery; its flowers funereal; the spells of the temptress and tempter are broken; its boasted heroes—pride, selfishness, lust, ambition, and fraud—dwindle into insignificance in the eyes of the soldiers of Christ who have seen the realities of greatness, pleasure, and wealth. We have the example of our Lord to encourage us when we meet temptation on high ground, on a field far higher than the exceeding high mountain; and His victory there assures ours. Living the life of entire consecration, we are at our best in encountering the foe; in vigour, preparedness, confidence, we overcome the spirits of wickedness. War in heaven inevitably ends with the victory of the saints, as with the victory of the angels.

It is easy to suffer and die in the 'heavenlies.' It

was whilst St. Paul dwelt there that he dared to call the afflictions of life, of which he had a full share, 'light,' and 'but for a moment.' A larger experience of the heavenly grace thus abates even the tragical sorrows of the present time. And to die in the 'heavenlies' is not to see death. As in the Finland summer, at midnight the sun just dips below the horizon and no more, there is no division between the sunset and the dawn; the same rosy flush serves for both; so is the sunset of the saint, and the dawn of eternal day—one melts into the other with sweet surprise.

An old controversy was waged over the question. Do we enter into this higher life by one distinct act of faith, or do we grow into it by degrees? Perhaps both; we may pass the snow-line without being distinctly conscious of the hour and circumstance, the grand point being that we do pass it. We soon become conscious when we have entered into a larger blessing. Leaving disputation, let us set our soul on the realization of all that Christ purchased for us, and lives to give us; then shall we realise the glorious promise, 'The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended' (Isa. lx. 19, 20).

XIII

THE ASSURANCE OF HOPE

God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, interposed with an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us; which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil.—Heb. vi. 17–19.

The Christian hope not only irradiates our temporal future, it stretches beyond the borders of the present, anticipating a future and an enduring life. In the light of revelation we are already citizens of the eternal; the emptiness and impermanence that seem to beset us is an appearance only; there is an underlying reality to which every true life is related, and in that relation arises the sense of deathlessness. Already we must count ourselves immortal, dealing directly with 'the things that cannot be moved.' The present is of unspeakable significance, just as it is the beginning of a far-reaching destiny. As tersely stated by Whichcote, 'We must now naturalize ourselves to the employment of eternity.'

The immense importance of the question of our immortality is well expressed by Dr. McTaggart, who, in criticizing Hegel for his omission to emphasize the immortality of the individual, writes: 'It remains a defect in his work. For this is a question which no philosophy can be justified in treating as insignificant. A philosopher may answer it affirmatively, or negatively, or may deny his power of answering it at all.

But however he may deal with it, he is clearly wrong if he treats it as unimportant. For it does not only make all the difference for the future, but it makes a profound difference for the present. Am I eternal, or am I a mere temporary manifestation of something eternal which is not myself? The answer to this question may not greatly influence my duties in everyday life. But we can scarcely exaggerate the difference which will be made in our estimate of our place in the universe, and, consequently, in our ideals, our aspirations, our hopes, the whole of the emotional colouring of our lives.'[1]

Let us, then, review some of the considerations which assure this hope. In our text God is said to give to Abraham a certain promise for the future, confirming it by an oath. Let us say that the Almighty Spirit wrought in the mind of the patriarch a luminous hope that had all the positiveness of a divine asseveration. So, argues the writer of this Epistle, *we* have a twofold assurance of a great future. 'Two immutable things'—the promise confirmed by an oath. What, then, does this mean to us? Shall we misinterpret the spirit of our text if we take it to signify that in nature God has given us an intimation of immortality, and in redemption confirmed it by an oath? We hail a double rainbow; the promise in the constitution of things, and that promise made absolute in Christ.

I. Consider the *natural basis* of the great hope. Suggestions arising out of the depths of our nature cannot be lightly set aside, and in various ways such suggestions force themselves upon us. We do not know of a time when the doctrine of a future life was not held; and if any belief whatever is to be considered universal, it is this. Sometimes a sanction for the doctrine is found in the structure of the mind. The

[1] *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology.*

invincible feeling that we are too big for this world, and never exhaust ourselves in a brief life, persuades many. The indestructibility of matter and mind is a theory that carries weight with others. Our delight in greatness and permanence is often urged as a token that death does not end all. Very varied are the arguments by which men express their impatience with temporal limitations; some of them, we are bound to say, are not specially convincing, yet it is significant that from so many points of view we get glimpses of a larger life.

Thinkers who most emphatically reject revelation nevertheless continue to construe hopefully the problem of the hereafter. 'To execute great things a man must live as though he had never to die,' was a maxim of Vauvenargues, and one, we are told, that gained the lively praise of Voltaire. Many workers of a sceptical temper, who have done great things, did reason thus. Approaching the problem from different points of view, they reached the same conclusion. A metaphysician like Montesquieu bears this witness: 'I know not how the atheists think, but, for myself, I would not exchange the idea of my immortality for the happiness of a day. I delight in believing that I am immortal as God Himself. Independently of revelation, metaphysics give me a very strong hope of my eternal happiness, which I would not willingly renounce.' We are not surprised that a religious painter like Sir Charles Eastlake should write: 'Beauty, in all its highest forms, is calculated to impress on human beings the belief in a perfection greater than this world contains'; but it is impressive to know that another aesthete and a doubter like Goethe should be so firmly persuaded of immortality: 'The philosopher does not need the countenance of religion to prove certain

doctrines; as, for instance, eternal duration. Man should believe in immortality; he has a right to this belief; it corresponds with the wants of his nature, and he may believe in the promises of religion. To me, the eternal existence of my soul is proved from my idea of activity; if I work on incessantly till my death, Nature is bound to give me another form of existence when the present one can no longer sustain my spirit.' Balzac also was of opinion that practical life tends to produce this conviction, for he puts these words into the mouth of his *Country Doctor*: 'After I am gone, my work of civilization will continue. When you have set yourself to do anything, something within you urges you on, you see, and you cannot bear to leave it unfinished. The craving within us for order and perfection is one of the signs that point most surely to a future existence.' Any number of similar testimonies from the ranks of rationalism to the same effect might be adduced. Men do not get rid of religious beliefs because they leave the Church and formally renounce its creed, nor altogether even when they lapse into a sensual life; in defiance of all, the deathless principle persists, makes its presence felt, its voice heard, its majesty acknowledged, where and when least expected.

Again, it is instructive to note that whilst a future life is denied, a substitute for it more or less mystical is supplied. George Meredith writes of the Christian belief in immortality as 'a sensual dream,' and as 'the smoking of priest's opium'; but in a letter immediately following addressed to a lady who has lost her husband, he continues in this strain: 'You are right as to my affection for him. He was one of the few true men I have known. And, my friend, these men live in us. And more, they are the higher work of Nature, which she will not let pass away.

They have the eternal in them. I do not look on death as a victory over us. Death and life are neighbours, each the cause of the other ; and the Task for us, under stress of deprivation, is to take our loved ones into the mind, and commune with them spirit to spirit—so will they be wedded to us faster, closer about us, than when we had the voices and eyes.'[1] Whose opium is this? Very fine poetry, well intended, pathetic, but surely nothing more than a delicate narcotic, a lulling drug. The alchemist was reputed to be able to create from the ashes of the rose a faint vapourous image of the perished flower, only without its colour and fragrance ; having rejected the substantial hope of immortality, the poet supplies this spectral substitute. It is, however, an unmistakable confession that when the crisis comes we cannot all at once reconcile ourselves to the idea of annihilation.

Philosophy assumes to console us with a larger horizon. In lieu of the hope of personal immortality, it dwells upon the fact that our individual life may be protracted in the life of humanity. Eventually the earth must perish, but until that catastrophe occurs we shall live in the forces we set in motion, our life thus becoming practically as immense as that of the race. Positivism lacks the courage boldly to drop us into the gulf of nothingness, and so affects to soothe us by substituting an immortality of influence for one of personal consciousness. If a man live nobly, the fact of the immortality of influence may justly inspire comfort when he comes to bid the world farewell ; but that is only a portion of his great heritage. Human nature will not stand the blunt denial of its proper immortality, and so the Positivist

[1] *Letters*, vol. ii., p. 424.

priest must foist into his funeral service an immortality of some sort. More recently Rationalism has felt the need of still further expanding the horizon. The interval between the present and the destruction of our globe does not satisfy man's insatiable appetite for existence, therefore the horizon must be pushed farther back. Man, say these philosophers who reject revelation and yet still hanker after an equivalent for immortality, will never become perfect in this world, for it will not last long enough; in a future universe he will become perfect. When the sun has gone out, there will be other suns, worlds, and moons. Human tendencies, moral tendencies, will survive the destruction of the present universe, and be perfected in a subsequent stage. The mind will go through the same form of cosmic evolution as matter; and all the tendencies and impulses of the present existence will have their results in another existence. Mankind can complete only a part of its evolution upon this planet; the rest will be accomplished upon other planets, and throughout all time, till man becomes divine.[1] In South Africa a law exists directed against illicit diamond dealing. Is not this rationalistic theory of the future a jewel stolen from the treasury of revelation? No; it is not a crown jewel; it is a paste diamond, a laboured imitation of the original, yet at the same time, doing sincerest homage to the original. When a man subscribes to this philosophical theory, how far short is he of the theological dogma? He has arrived pretty much at the same conclusion, only by a perverse process. What he rejected as an article of religious faith he adopts as a philosophical inference.

It is often contended that the millions of the East

[1] Hearn, *Interpretations of Literature.*

do not hold this doctrine of immortality. But it must always be remembered that whilst an atheistic or a pantheistic doctrine of negation is professed, its disciples find a refuge from the dread of blank extinction in the anticipation of transmigrations and absorptions which constitute practically the equivalent of a doctrine of immortality. It is an uncomfortable prospect; but such as it is, it is a refusal to accept the funeral pyre as the goal of existence. In the absence of a clearer revelation the instinct has run wild and burlesqued the sublime truth; still, the instinct is there, and in an abnormal way asserts its power.

Our point is, then, that an expectation of a life beyond is implanted in our nature, inwritten in the very constitution of things. Many lines of argument, starting from many dissimilar points, converge on the one conviction; and in the absence of all reasonings we are agitated by mysterious aspirations which certainly do not belong to the beasts which perish. As Wordsworth testifies,

> Yet to me I feel
> That an internal brightness is vouchsafed
> That must not die, that must not pass away.

As Emerson says, 'The blazing evidence of immortality is our dissatisfaction with any other solution.' The great hope is the promise of God to the race, written by His finger in the very fabric of our being; and however the writing may from time to time be obscured and misinterpreted through ignorance, sensuality, or sophistry, it cannot be effaced or denied. If the biologist reads in the bodily instincts the records of the past, we may surely read with no less confidence in the aspirations of the soul the prophecy of the future; if truth springeth out of the earth, it

not less shines from heaven. We can never believe that a 'faithful Creator' has deceived the work of His hands by inspiring the large desire, or that He will fail to honour the instinct that He has implanted deep in the creature's heart.

II. If in Nature we have the promise of immortality, *in Christ that promise has been made absolute,* confirmed by an oath. The rainbow that spans the churchyard is not a lunar bow, faint and dubious, but clear, bold, intense, like unto an emerald. It is of the first importance that we bring every assumed truth to the test of Christ's teaching. St. John admonishes us to try the spirits by judging them in their relation to our Lord, and thus must we judge whatever doctrines and theories solicit our reliance. How, then, does this doctrine of human immortality look in the light of Christ, of His life, teaching, and work?

Our Lord Himself is the supreme argument for the doctrine. 'For verily not of angels doth He take hold, but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren' (Heb. ii. 16, 17). He is the embodiment of the ideal humanity; what He is, it is in reality; humanity is that in the thought of God. Through passion, selfishness, and wilfulness, through grievous ill-treatment, the greatness of humanity had become obscured; the image of God was not effaced, yet sadly defaced; being made subject to vanity, a lofty destiny no longer seemed credible. But in the Incarnation its essential grandeur was reasserted, its blemishes cleansed, its divine strength and beauty manifested, and its claim to glory, honour, and immortality finally vindicated. We can now no more think of man as a temporal manifestation than we can think of Christ as such; and how impossible

to think that of Him! 'The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory,' and in that sublime event we are assured of our divine lineage, immense capacity, and enduring inheritance. It is the accepted rule to judge of the nature and worth of things as seen in their highest embodiment, and we justly estimate human nature as revealed in our Lord. When this is done, how unthinkable it becomes that we are exhausted in this fugitive life! 'The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.' (Rom. vi. 23). He is the proof supreme and pledge of immortality.

The teaching of our Lord declares our high and holy calling to reach far beyond the world of time and sense. He never attempts to prove the persistence of life, never even formally asserts it, but it is consistently assumed; the consciousness of our undying greatness is the very soul of His teaching. He never distinguishes this world from a future one; He knows only one world, the eternal world, and ever speaks from its depths; it determines all His teaching, and is the power of that teaching. The evangelists give no hint that He ever thought of us as creatures of a day; in His eyes we are always the children of God, partakers of the divine nature, destined to tenant the many mansions of His Father's house, and He ever addressed us as such. In His conversation with the Sadducees He showed that the Old Testament sanctioned the doctrines of resurrection and immortality, rebuking them for their unbelief: 'Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God' (Matt. xxii. 29). But those doctrines were contained in the ancient oracles chiefly by implication. Nansen tells that when the long Arctic winter was approaching its end, an image of the sun appeared,

a mirage; the sun itself was yet below the horizon, and it was days before its disk appeared above the ice. So in lawgiver, prophet, and psalmist, the Jew saw an image, a reflection, a mirage of the great hope; but it was only in the coming of our Lord that the glorious orb of immortality arose upon our race, causing 'the springing day to shine.' Not all at once, not violently, not in a glare and dazzle, not perplexing and confusing terrestrial life, but softly, silently, sweetly, like the growing light of the morning, did the knowledge of eternal life dawn upon a weary and despairing world. The light of immortality rests upon every page of the Gospels, and the apostles, who so well knew the thought and purpose of their Master, awoke the nations to new life and hope by their message of incorruption, by the vision of a world of perfected and enduring blessedness.

The whole of Christ's redemptive work proceeded on the same assumption. What do His unparalleled sufferings mean except the strange importance of those for whom they were endured? 'For it became Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings' (Heb. ii. 10). Surely the Cross does not contemplate the salvation of creatures doomed to a swift oblivion! Its obvious signification is that a great price was paid for a great salvation on behalf of those who were intrinsically worthy of it. And what does that empty grave of the Crucified proclaim and promise for the redeemed? 'But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made

alive' (1 Cor. xv. 20–22). It is related that when the mummy of the 'lovely Thais,' the friend of Alexander the Great, was discovered, she was holding in her withered hand a rose-of-Jericho, a symbol of the resurrection; the Rose of Sharon, assuring a better resurrection, perfumes the grave of the saint. Now and for ever He is the Living One, and because He lives we shall live also. 'We have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil; whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us.'

'By two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to deceive us, we have strong encouragement.' Has not Heaven, then, granted in this twofold pledge the utmost assurance of which the case admits? A sceptical writer makes light of the witness of the human heart in its strong desires and aspirations after a vaster life, referring us to the asylum, where we see the futility of splendid dreams and fancies. We do not seek our evidences in asylums, but in rational and normal life, and it is entirely philosophical to reckon with the incurable desires and intuitions of the soul. 'Doth not even Nature itself teach you?' cries the apostle, treating another subject; and he would have placed still greater emphasis on that argument here. It is a wholly legitimate source of knowledge and prescience, and it will be found that the very men who ignore its testimony in relation to immortality are usually foremost to recognize the validity of the instinctive on any other question. A few months before his death Charles Reade wrote to a correspondent: 'Alas! evidence of what we both pine to believe comes not to me; I am of little faith.' But was not the fact that both 'pined to believe' an evidence itself not to be disregarded? It is no trait of wholesome, rational

life to consume itself longing for impossibilities; such may be the case in abnormal instances, but we refuse to believe that the hope of the future native to our common humanity is an illusion born of disease. The title-deeds of immortality written by the finger of God in the red pages of the heart, which in a pristine state would have proved sufficient against every exigency, have through our sin and folly become faint and dubious; yet are they decipherable, alike for our humiliation and our great encouragement.

And now the endorsement of our Lord! What a mighty, sufficing testimony to a future life of grandeur and beatitude is the New Testament! 'A hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil.' St. Paul knew a good deal about anchors, and his reference to the anchor in this place inclines one to think that he had a hand in this Epistle. He knew by painful experience of anchors that do not hold; but this is one that will neither break nor drag. We lay hold of the immutable promise of God in Christ; we fasten upon the eternal grounds of the divine truth and love and faithfulness, and fear no shipwreck. Said He who is the Truth and the Life, 'I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, which hath given them unto Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one' (John x. 28, 29). Let us, then, be satisfied once for all; let this assured confidence fill and garrison our heart; through all the years let it make us strong and calm; and when heart and flesh fail, let us triumph with our Master, for no triumph can be more absolute and sublime, 'Father into Thy hands I commend My spirit' (Luke xxiii. 46).

XIV

THE ROYALTY OF SERVICE

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside His garments; and He took a towel, and girded Himself. Then He poureth water into the bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.—JOHN xiii. 3–5.

No self-centred, self-serving life ensures satisfaction. In the very nature of things it is imperative that we look beyond our personal interests, and take thought for the welfare of our neighbour. In a word, unselfishness is a fact in human nature and life, as truly as the self-regarding instincts are, and we can never be happy whilst we cultivate the latter alone. 'In the fierce battle of life there is small chance for the exercise of charity. We have no evidence to show, apart from certain instinctive traits, that one being ever helps another unless something is given in return,' is the verdict of the naturalist concerning the world of plants and animals. On the other hand, human society gives ample room for the exercise of charity, and we are moved to assist our needy neighbour without thought of advantage. Here, then, we see a striking feature differentiating man from the rest of the creation. The animal or plant possesses no organ except such as has been fashioned for its own advantage; but in the human mind there are other-regarding impulses Our thoughts are not limited to our own

things but include the things of others; our affection for others prompts us to self-sacrifice for their sakes; we plan and toil, give and suffer for their happiness.

I. *Nowhere has the sentiment of brotherhood and all that it implies found such forcible expression as in the ministry of our Lord.* His life, above all others, was the revelation of pure and undistinguishing love; and whoever has the mind of Christ is a lover of humanity, a friend of the people, a servant of mankind, never happier than when he finds opportunity to serve and to bless. That the pious are so lost in other-worldliness, and so absorbed in securing their own salvation, that they neglect the sick and sorrowful world at their feet, is a stale gibe of secularism abundantly refuted. Loyal to the higher universe, the Christian is not less but more devoted to the welfare of his needy brother. At one extremity of the vegetable world the air-plant and orchid, ethereal things usually far up in the high forest trees, draw their nourishment from the dew and light of the blue heavens in which they are embosomed, and apparently glance superciliously upon the earth far below, with which they are little concerned; whilst at the other end of the scale are those Alpine plants known as geophytes, from the fact that the chief portion of their existence is spent underground. The godly are duplicates neither of the air-plant aloof in the heights, spurning the ground, nor of the geophyte buried in the dust; rather do they answer to the lovely plants of the temperate zone, which at one and the same time take firm hold of the earth and drink in the celestial influences of sun and shower, starring the landscape with their beauty, filling the air with their sweetness.

The instructed Christian acknowledges his double relationship to heaven and to earth, being well assured

that he attains to the utmost glory and virtue whilst true to both. And this is no mere theory; a rapid glance over the nations is enough to satisfy sincere men as to the reality, immense range, and manifoldness of Christian humanitarianism. We are bold to maintain that no great practical system of benevolence exists within Christendom but has its roots in the Christian Church, and derives its chief support, either directly or indirectly, from that communion. The Christian fellowship may never express perfectly the ideal charity of its Master, yet there shines through it with unmistakable lustre the love and sacrifice of Him 'who went about doing good.' This is a fact not to be denied; the sacrificial life of the Church vindicates its doctrine. And the absence of philanthropy beyond the borders of Christendom is significant. The leaders of opinion in India, China, Burmah, and Japan, whilst often hostile critics of the Christian faith, are constrained to do homage to the Christian charity which ministers effectually to the healing and feeding of the otherwise neglected native. The supreme design of the Church of God is to feed the perishing multitude with the bread of everlasting life, yet a thousand flowers of gracious charity mingle with its golden corn.

II. *We specify several particulars in which the passion to serve is reinforced by the Christian tradition.*

1. The New Testament has established *the dignity* of service. The nobleness of helpfulness is so familiar to the modern mind that we are ready to account it an innate impulse, one common to men of all generations; it is, however, far otherwise. The ancients knew little of modern science, yet it is certain that they knew still less of our philanthropy. In those days the glory of the opulent and great was estimated by the

number of slaves who ministered to their pride and pleasure ; whilst the grandeur of a nation was supposed to reside in its power to crush and destroy its neighbours. In this light the matter was regarded all over the earth, and right away from the day of Nimrod. It was the privilege of greatness to be served ; served at the expense of those over whom by force it could establish authority.

If our Lord did not immediately revolutionize the thought of the world on this subject, He threw upon it a marvellous light that has gradually worked such a revolution. In that symbolic act recorded in our text was expressed the essence of true religion, the genius of the Christian religion : supreme greatness revealing its utmost glory in rendering loving service to the humble. Whatever may be said about the natural growth of the altruistic principle, history makes clear the fact that the ministry of our Lord created an abyss between the ancient and the modern estimate of greatness. He did not design to degrade the purple, but to explain wherein the majesty of greatness lay ; and ever since that hour it has been understood as never before that no coronation is complete without the towel—nay, that without it the jewelled raiment is a mockery. The apostles rightly interpreted the unique act of their Lord ; and all their epistles show that in their conception of the Christian Church it was an institution designed to console the afflicted, to counsel the perplexed, to aid the needy, and in a thousand ways to seek and to save that which was lost.

At the present hour we may see how profoundly greatness has been revalued, for no institution, office, or movement is any longer cordially honoured except as in some real sense it ministers to the welfare of the people. The Church commands popular reverence

according to the measure of its sympathy with those who need it most. Its venerable traditions and ritual splendour may compel the homage of the few, but its humanity more and more commands popular esteem and affection. The sight of a single rag of the towel attracts the multitude far more than all its pomp of gold and fine needlework. Governments hitherto have only imperfectly apprehended the end for which they exist. What Gibbon says about kings in general, that ' their power is most effective in destruction,' is abundantly confirmed by all history; whilst parliaments have been more concerned for senatorial aggrandizement than for the public well-being. Silently another temper takes possession of the political world. The best thought of the greatest thinkers is being directed to problems involving the common welfare; and the first of these problems concerns those who, for one reason or another, are found at the basis of the social structure. In the wonderful days in which we live few things are more wonderful than the scrapping of royal regalia. The sweepings of palaces lie in many places in glittering heaps; rent crowns, broken sceptres, shattered swords, polluted purple, historic jewels, gold plate, ornaments, and heirlooms, await the dustman. Not, let it be observed, because rulers and government are to become obsolete, but that the towel shall henceforth have its place of honour in the wardrobe of kings.

Modern science shares in the spirit of service and sacrifice. Fears are sometimes expressed lest the study of Nature should divert attention from the claims of humanity; but there seems little ground for such fears. Pasteur had every right to become the spokesman of modern science, and this was his aspiration: ' It would indeed be a grand thing to

give the heart its share in the progress of science'; and when addressing a brilliant assembly of scientists in Paris he gave utterance to this confession and prophecy: 'And you, delegates from foreign nations, who have come from so far to give to France a proof of sympathy, you bring me the deepest joy that can be felt by a man whose invincible belief is that Science and Peace will triumph over Ignorance and War, that nations will unite, not to destroy, but to build, *and that the future will belong to those who will have done most for suffering humanity.*'[1] Even the exclusive world of art is no longer to be the appanage of opulence and luxury, but to subserve the culture and enjoyment of the many. 'Art will not grow and flourish, nay, it will not long exist, unless it be shared by all people; and for my part I don't wish that it should,' wrote William Morris.

The sentiment of service is becoming far more than a sentiment; it is triumphantly working out itself in every sphere as the regnant principle; and in the obscure chamber where the Divine Man girded Himself for the lowliest duty we find the fountain-head of that pure river of water of life which is making the arid wilderness of selfishness to blossom as the rose.

2. The *solidarity of all true service* is another great truth made manifest by revelation, and specially emphasized by our Lord.

How often when our heart prompts an act of sacrifice are we liable to paralysing discouragement by the thought of the *insignificance* of what we can give or do! If we could effect something of magnitude, it would be worth while; but what is possible to us

[1] *The Life of Pasteur*, by Vallery-Radot; trans. of Mrs. Devonshire, vol. ii., p. 297.

is so inconsiderable that it seems of little consequence whether it is done or not. Science and revelation, however, combine to shed a welcome light on this perplexity. Professor J. A. Thomson reminds his readers that 'one of the most important indirect results of Darwinism has been to convince naturalists that no fact of life is trivial. What once would have been regarded by naturalists as a trivial thing is seen to be of fundamental importance.'[1] Modern science often furnishes the screen and limelight to render vivid the truths of the moral universe, and it does so when it affirms that no fact of life may be accounted trivial. Nearly two thousand years ago our Lord made this truth clear so far as it concerns spiritual and moral service. Rarely, if ever, does He speak of magnificent sacrifices on behalf of His kingdom; but the smallest offering, the slenderest service, calls forth His warmest appreciation. The alabaster box of ointment was only relatively precious, yet how He magnified it! 'Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she has done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her' (Matt. xxvi. 13). The beneficence of the Good Samaritan was not specially costly. 'And on the morrow he took out two pence, and gave them to the host' (Luke. x. 35) —a contribution that in modern times would have been acknowledged under the head of 'small sums.' The widow who cast 'two mites' into the treasury is immortalized; whilst 'the cup of cold water' given in His name glows in the eyes of men and angels beyond all the golden goblets of kings. And all this in an age when the minute was despised, when nothing was considered worthy of notice except as it was

[1] *Biology of the Seasons.*

immense, spectacular, imperial, historic! 'Nothing but the very minute seems worthy of the attention of the modern school,' writes Leonard Huxley. How modern Jesus Christ was! He clearly saw in the higher realm what it has taken genius ages to discover in the lower. He understood that no deed of faith and love is trivial, but of fundamental importance, and He desires His disciples to keep that truth in constant remembrance. The little acts of kindness constitute the major part of the charity of the world, and what an impulse to such acts has been given by the teaching and example of our Lord!

The servant of humanity is liable to be chilled by the sense of *loneliness*. He judges himself to be isolated; he is disheartened because his endeavours lack continuity and seem fragmentary; whatever he may be able to do appears unrelated to any general system and sustained movement. Such a sense of piecemeal endeavour is a great trial to faith and patience. Yet here again the science that God has appointed as a helpmeet for His Church may once more assist us. As Professor Thomson states it, 'It was part of Darwin's genius that he realized, more than any other, the solidarity of Nature and the interrelation of things. . . . He disclosed a system of Nature, a web of life, in which even the apparently trivial fact is invested with momentous importance because of its complex correlations with others.'[1] Has not the New Testament rendered us in another sphere the service that the modern scientist has rendered in the natural sphere? 'I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not laboured: others have laboured, and ye are entered into their labour.' 'One soweth, and another reapeth.' 'He that reapeth

[1] *Biology of the Seasons.*

receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.' (John iv. 36, 38). Once again, how modern our Lord is! He distinctly understood the solidarity of His kingdom and the interrelation of all service and sacrifice on its behalf. He disclosed a system of humanitarian action, a web of life, in which each small endeavour is invested with momentous importance because of its relation to the work and workers of all localities, methods, and ages.

Of the marvellous manner in which one worker for truth and humanity affects another and far-removed worker, Edmund Gosse gives a striking example. In 1615 a semi-Nonconformist Puritan divine, named Daniel Dyke, minister of Coggeshall, in Essex, published a work entitled *The Mystery of Self-Deceiving*, which was translated obscurely into French, and of which La Rochefoucauld made use in the fashioning of his famous *Maximes*. Gosse may well remark, 'It is certainly, an amazing thing to find that this clumsy old treatise of English divinity was apparently possessed as a treasure by the most elegant and the most sceptical of Frenchmen.'[1] The subtle interlinkings of Nature are not more marvellous than the interactions of thought and endeavour in the intellectual and religious worlds. Little did the old Puritan foresee the destination and effect of his treatise, and just as little does any servant of God and humanity understand the range and measure of his influence.

Opportunity, resource, life itself, so soon end, that interest may well flag in work we cannot hope to complete; but the consciousness of the continuity of work and the permanence of its results quiet and

[1] *Three French Moralists*. p. 28.

calm us. We need not hurry over anything. 'One generation shall praise Thy works to another,' exults the psalmist. And the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews grasps the truth in its widest application when he discloses the intimate relationship existing between the heroes of ancient Israel and their Christian posterity. 'And these all . . . received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect' (xi. 39, 40). The work of the first generation is continued by intermediate generations, and completed by the latest. The recollection of this unbroken continuity ought to comfort our heart and kindle our enthusiasm. John Stuart Mill and Roebuck when young were great walkers, and on their country excursions Mill would fill his pockets with sweet violet seed and scatter it in the hedges as he went along. Practically a century has elapsed since that sowing, and very likely the posterity of the pleasant plants still survives, delighting the eye with its purple, scenting the air with its fragrance. So the germs of beauty and blessing that we sow by the wayside as we trudge along will spring up to inspire joy and hope in the pilgrims who follow us long after we sleep under the grass. No true worker is insulated, no real service a disjointed endeavour. The Lord of the Church inspires, controls, and harmonizes the labours of millions of His self-sacrificing servants to one sublime end. The unity of Nature is not a more assured truth than is the unity of all noble workers, as revealed in results enduring and glorious, and justifying the whole intricate and costly process.

3. The *successfulness of faithful service* is guaranteed by revelation. After what has been already said, few words may suffice on this point. Much that we

attempt seems to fail; it appears as if thought, time, money, toil, were thrown away, and many conclude that they are. The natural result of this apparent abortiveness is that we become discouraged. If zeal is to be maintained, we must be cheered in our work by the belief of the certainty at which we aim. 'Nothing,' writes Dugald Stewart, 'tends so much to call forth the exertions of individuals in the public service as a prevailing belief in the success of those efforts which they put forth to inform and bless mankind.' It is a great consolation to know that never once does our Lord hint at such a thing as unsuccessfulness in noble work, although His own career would have seemed to suggest pessimistic reflections. Just as His graces outshine those of the chiefest of saints, so does His faith in the power of His truth, the virtue of His sacrifice, and the triumph of His kingdom, transcend in its mighty grasp, its untroubled calm, its conquering energy, the faith of the greatest heroes and martyrs. The thought of failure in sacrificial work is utterly abhorrent to the genius of the Christian faith; such fear is the most malignant form of heresy. That all sincere faith and effort sooner or later flower into something beautiful is no fancy, but a fundamental truth established by Jesus Christ.

Our Lord set the service of humanity in a wholly new light, and with commanding authority. He showed that the love of our neighbour was a sovereign principle and readiness to help a primal duty. He enjoined the doing of good as a law of His kingdom; He set the supreme example of sacrifice; by His Spirit He breathes into the heart of His disciples that fervour of love that is the grand dynamic of philanthropy. In a word, the advent of our Lord redeemed the service of humanity from action which

is merely casual, the response to a passing impulse, to make of it a law, a science, a foremost obligation, a master-passion, a pure delight. He restored a chaos to order, beauty, music. Where is charity understood, seen, reverenced, practised, as in the Church of God?

We cannot neglect this social duty without serious detriment to our own personality and happiness. To be faithless to the generous instinct, to surrender ourselves to habits of ease and indulgence, to leave society to get on as best it may whilst we gratify selfish tastes and ambitions, means the denial of the soul's peace and the decay of our noblest faculties. A recent writer has reminded us of the fate of Paganini's magic violin, which was left to his native city of Genoa on condition that henceforth it should not be played upon—a fatal request, it would seem, for a peculiarity of wood is that as long as it is handled and used it lives, and wears but slightly; it is, however, no sooner laid aside than it begins to decay, and becomes the prey of insects. 'This magic violin, which might have thrilled the world for hundreds of years to come with its heart-searching tone, is becoming worm-eaten in its grand glass case, and will soon be a little heap of worthless dust.' The mouldering instrument is a figure of the selfish soul, of the life withdrawn from society in the interests of personal leisure and indulgence. No longer exercised to ends of service and sacrifice, the integrity and glory of our nature suffer; the expansive, uplifting, refining, tonic forces are lost, and the music ceases with disuse. The social element cannot be denied with impunity; it is the condition alike of personal joy and of the general welfare, at once the root and flower of civilization.

How deep, pure, and serene is the heart at leisure from itself, and watchful for the opportunity to serve! The sadness of life would at once be softened if this were better understood. Despite all the sorrow of His lot, how profound was the peace of our Master, how intense His joy! And the secret of His sublime experience was found in the love He bore us, constraining Him to fill His days with words of grace and deeds of mercy; His passionate unselfishness rendered Him insensible to His cruel environment. So with the primitive saints. Throughout the Epistles rings the note of triumph; one might think the pathway of the disciple had been one of primroses, but the severity of the times was largely forgotten in the exultation of the soul. A traveller tells how a fall of snow happened on a sunny day in Spain, adding, 'But when we put up our hands to catch a flake it became only a tear, almost ere it touched the flesh.' So lightly did the afflictions of the present time affect the apostles and their brethren, and this to a large extent because their glowing enthusiasm of humanity made them unconscious of their tragic condition. *A Student in Arms* in our own day has just told us how the soldier fresh to the field of war forgot all fear, discontent, and suffering so soon as he awoke to the claims of his comrades, in thought for his battalion, in ministering to his company. Let us hasten to learn the great lesson our Lord came from heaven to teach!

XV

THE RETARDED TRIUMPH

Thus saith the Lord: Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.—JER. xxxi. 16.

JEREMIAH anticipates the return of his countrymen from the captivity of Assyria and Chaldea. The period of the Exile was a time of suspense and suffering, and their protracted sorrow had brought many of the captives to the border of despair. The prophet assures them that however unlikely their restoration may seem it will nevertheless come to pass. None who believed in that return, who prayed and worked toward it, were to permit themselves to be discouraged. However long might be the delay, however hopeless might seem the event, the remnant were to remain confident in the darkest day, believing, praying working, looking for the dawn. The Evangelical Church of to-day is in a position corresponding to that of these patriotic Jews. Our race is exiled; it bleeds beneath an iron tyranny in a far country, and nothing at times seems more incredible than its restoration to true liberty, and the glory and joy which liberty makes possible. But we are encouraged not to lose faith and hope. Many of our most energetic efforts to hasten a better state of things appear to fail, or only partially to succeed, and often it is difficult to refrain our voice from weeping and our eyes from tears. But what I now wish to suggest is, that no work done for our generation can be in vain, that no magnanimous effort is ever really lost, and that

most blessed results are often attained as the ultimate result of temporary disappointments. To-day it is *our* joy to hear a heavenly voice saying, '*Thy* work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.' We too shall hail the end of exile. Our tents shall be built, our palaces remain, 'And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry; and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small' (Jer. xxx. 19).

Let us, then, proceed to give some reasons why we should continue to hope for the best even in times of bitterest delay and disappointment.

I. *Disappointment is often a prelude to the attainment of results ardently desired.* A wide view of nature and history renders us conscious of this law, for such it may be called. And it is most important that we sometimes take the larger view of things, although congregations are apt to be impatient of general considerations. Yet many of our errors and anxieties arise from partial views. Professor Bonney, the geologist, writes: 'Hypotheses founded on experience restricted to one's own back garden are as mischievous in science as they are in politics.' This error may mar our consideration of religious questions, making us the prey of painful thoughts and dismal fears in consequence of the restricted view. Fixing our attention on the local and temporary, on incidental, isolated happenings which are vexatious and disheartening, we are almost paralysed; when, if we would only look over the back garden wall into the big world and the long ages, look to the universal or general, to the whole of things, the reality of things, we should be reassured and comforted.

1. A superficial view of *Nature* might lead us to regard the world as little else than a past scene of failure and waste, whilst deeper reflection will satisfy us that the divine end contemplated is unerringly reached. The sunshine of the geological ages might seem lost ; yet treasured up in the depths of the earth it supplies the modern world with light, warmth, power, and beauty. We might easily infer that a similar waste is taking place now with the sunshine. By far the greater part of the sun's outlay of light and heat appears to be lost in the depths of space. The earth catches only the merest fraction. The planets and moon also intercept a trifle, but how small the portion of the mighty flood they can utilize ! The rain seems wasted on salt seas and barren deserts. The forests teem with spores, seeds, germs, over and above what can possibly mature. The earth and water swarm with abortive life. The fragrance of millions of lovely flowers sweetens the unbreathed air. In every direction we witness what are commonly construed as signs of waste and failure ; yet science will hear of no such a thing ; it assures us that a law of parsimony runs through every domain of Nature, a law of conservation of material and energy that forbids any waste of either. In the great festivals of Nature twelve baskets are always reserved in the rear to gather the surplus ; and when the lean years threaten, the economized treasures of matter and energy are forthcoming to sustain and complete the life of the world. The profoundest student cannot trace all the workings of the combined laws of lavishment and economy ; but that both exist he is confident, and he is as certain of the one as of the other.

We cannot look upon Nature without learning afresh the fact that beneath seeming abortiveness

the grand ends of the Creator are steadily worked out. Amid apparent misdirection, retrogression, malversation, and disaster, Nature arrives. Do not say that you do not particularly care for this kind of argument. Religious people are guilty of serious error in handing Nature over to materialists, and depriving themselves of some of her highest teachings. Isaiah did care for this kind of argument; he saw in the visible world a parable of the invisible, and with what convincing assurance he gloried in the doctrine of the Lord! 'For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it' (lv. 10, 11). It is good to detect natural law in the spiritual world, and again to find spiritual law in the natural world. No passage in the whole of revelation has given more comfort and courage to sorely tried workers for God than this passage from Isaiah. As certainly as God's will is realized in Nature through endless disguises, delays, reactions, and collapses, so certainly in the moral world shall the work of faith and labour of love bring forth the golden harvest, despite all eclipses, droughts, tempests, locusts, and caterpillars.

2. *History* shows the considerable extent to which *our intellectual and social progress is achieved under discouraging aspects.* The general opinion is that we owe everything to the few brilliant individuals who notoriously succeed in the pursuits with which they are identified, forgetting the scores of obscure

workers who were accounted more or less failures. The names of those who do ' not come off ' are almost or entirely unknown ; poets do not sing them, historians pass them by, and no monument perpetuates their memory. And yet how immense our debt to these obscure workers ! If these heroes had not fought and fallen, these reformers been pelted by scorn bitterer than stones, these actors been hissed off the stage ; if these adventurers had not perished in snows or jungles, these inventors not constructed the imperfect machines at which their generation scoffed, or these pioneers of industry not ventured on the speculation which landed them in bankruptcy, the victorious man and the triumphant movement would have been impossible. ' In a superficial review of the history of science a new idea or a striking experiment is associated with an individual name and a particular date. Hence we receive a general impression that science proceeds by sudden inspirations ; yet, on closer examination, we find that the salient features are connected with each other, and that the great landmarks are generally reached only by a succession of intermediate steps, some of which may be as important as the last which culminates in the final discovery. Time tends to efface the intermediate steps, so it is difficult to obtain a correct view of the continuity of science.' [1]

To the men who took the intermediate steps which time tends to efface we are deeply indebted, as well as to the famous names that at last blaze out, for these latter profited largely by the defective thoughts and ineffectual strivings of their inglorious predecessors. Sir J. D. Hooker, speaking of Darwin, said, ' What appeared to me to be one of the most

[1] Schuster and Shipley, *Britain's Heritage of Science.*

remarkable traits in his character was his power of turning to account the waste observations, failures, and even blunders of his predecessors in whatever subject of inquiry. It was this power of utilizing the vain efforts of others which, in my friend Sir James Paget's opinion, affords the best evidence of Darwin's genius.' It is ever thus. The interval between great discoveries is full of the records of earnest men attacking dark problems, on various lines attempting their solution, and yet passing away without achieving success ; it is this fact that imparts deep pathos to the story of intellectual progress. After a succession of these unfortunate seekers after truth, the genius ultimately arrives, who, instructed by the false or faltering experiments of others, perceives the way he ought to go, greatly helped by those who showed him the way he ought not to go.

The whole path of progress is littered with the ruins of accounted failure, and yet it was the path of progress. What we owe to honest, self-sacrificing, heroic, meritorious, yet defeated endeavour, is the unknown sublime of history. A recent traveller in the Desert of Cathay writes: 'The tracks of wayfarers get effaced, and many among them lose their way. On every side there extends a vast space with nothing to go by ; so travellers pile up the bones left behind to serve as road-marks.' Ah, pile up bones ! To a large extent in the march of civilization we are guided by the wreck and ruin of earnest pathfinders who went before us ; we are furthered by their privations, sufferings, and death. The bones of the martyrs of science, of politics, of commerce, are our road-marks ; but none of them perished in vain ; by their courage and sacrifice we are put on the track of the promised land. If strict justice were meted out to all, many in the

inglorious crowd of the unsuccessful would claim a big share in the glory of their more lucky peers.

Even when history *records the dissolution of great nations, it also suggests that apparent failure of a capital order masks real and even triumphant progress.* What an infinity of noble effort and costly sacrifice go to the elaboration of a splendid civilization! Tens of thousands of patriots toil and bleed to build up a nation in wealth, culture, and character, and then, as in a day, we behold that nation perish, and the infinite sacrifice that went to its creation seems to prove absolutely in vain, to be irretrievably lost. But further consideration satisfies us that it is not so. In the very hour of catastrophe, when all seems engulfed, the work of generations yields a more glorious fruitage. Egypt and its mighty neighbours passed suddenly into oblivion; but in their arts, architecture, science, and wisdom they left a heritage to mankind far grander and more enduring than their pyramids. When Greece perished as a nation, it scorned its old boundaries, becoming far more influential than before; its body mouldered, but its soul of beauty inspires the race. With the fall of Jerusalem the faith of the Jew became the gift of the Gentile, who is making of the wide world a New Jerusalem. When Rome ceased to exist politically, its genius walked abroad, and the great ideas for which it stood rule a vaster empire than that of the Caesars. When mediaeval Italy became a geographical expression, its intellectual life was no longer circumscribed by the Mediterranean, but prevailed throughout Europe, and glows now beyond the Atlantic. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.' History shows how true this is of nations. Having fulfilled

their destiny, they transmit to posterity for larger use their accumulated treasure and energy, intellectual and moral. As St. Paul divined concerning the destruction of Judaism, 'Their fall is the riches of the world,' so is it with every vanishing commonwealth. We cannot survey nature and history without the cheering conviction that, however it may be explained, errors are neutralized, waste is redeemed, reaction turns out only a form of perseverance, failure becomes construction, and whatever effort is directed to high ends proves finally effectual.

II. *If the greatest results in the lower realm are attained as by a law, despite disappointing aspects, the religious worker, seeking to establish the kingdom of God, may be reassured in the midst of the special difficulties with which he has to contend.* And very formidable those difficulties are. He who will do good on the lower levels and design only modest measures, will need faith and patience; but he who brings to the task high ideals must be prepared for endless frustrations, delays, and failures. How confounding and tantalizing noble and spiritual work appears to the carnal eye, is well shown in the following passage from the writings of that tranquil cynic, Anatole France. In reviewing a book entitled *Virtue in France,* a work containing many examples of valour and charity, the critic proceeds: 'Now what strikes one when one reads the actions of these men who devoted themselves to death, is the sublime powerlessness of their courage, the undeserved sterility of their sacrifice. Heroism and devotion are like great works of art—they have no object beyond themselves. One could almost say that their uselessness makes their greatness. Men sacrifice themselves for the sake of sacrifice. The object of the finest sacrifices is often unworthy; sometimes it is

nothing at all. In the madness of a species of sublime egoism, charity resembles love. Without doubt virtue is a force; it is even the only human force. But its fatal destiny is to be always defeated. It gives its soldiers the incomparable beauty that belongs to the vanquished. For a long time now, virtue has been striking formidable blows against evil; but evil is immortal; it laughs at our blows.'[1]

Happily we are not called upon to acquiesce in the conclusions of this eminent man, to agree with what is really a dirge at the funeral of virtues which the ages have taught us to count sublime. We cannot believe that the champions of humanity who displayed this courage and made these sacrifices did so in vain; for it is indisputable that they effectually withstood gigantic evils which oppressed their fellows. It is impossible to confound deeds like the abolition of slavery with works of art. Martyrs and missionaries contemplated great and worthy objects in submitting themselves to exile and death, and actually they have not the beauty of the vanquished, but the glory of the victorious. If the conclusions of Anatole France were accepted to any considerable extent, it would not be long before a cosmical French Revolution would conclude the whole tragedy. Yet the passage we quote, inspired throughout by the atheistic temper, gives a vivid view of the appearance of noble work to the carnal eye. The most disinterested sacrifices seem sterile, the rarest courage powerless. Heroism and devotion appear as nothing more than fine poetry or splendid art; the costliest charity a mere madness, and virtue a force whose fatal destiny is to be always defeated. The blows struck against vice are formidable and continuous; but evil laughs at such blows,

[1] *On Life and Letters*, First Series, p. 293.

and evil is immortal. It must be granted that to the superficial view this estimate of the vanity of virtue, of charity, and of sacrifice has much to say for itself; there are hours, too, when the hearts of the most devoted servants of God and the race fail them, hours when they hardly refrain their voice from weeping and their eyes from tears.

1. All godly workers have this special ground of confidence, *that the establishment of the kingdom of God is the one divine event to which the whole creation moves.* Such workers are not active in a cause that may or may not be a subsidiary part of the general order and purpose of creation, they act surely and directly to the supreme end. The sovereignty of the world is mediatorial, its government redemptive, the end of all things the recovery of a lost race to the knowledge, love, and righteousness of God. Ours is not a side-show in the great theatre; it is the supreme drama itself. It is only necessary to read the third chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians to understand that the final purpose of the Supreme is the reconciliation of all things to Himself in Christ Jesus. The one simple meaning of the earth is the glory of God in the salvation of the race. Herein lies the grandeur of the gospel. Herein lies the warrant of Christian missions. Herein is found the solid ground of the Christian hope for millennial days. Every worker for the evangelization of mankind ought firmly to grasp this sure and vital truth; it keeps one strong and steady amid puzzling fluctuations and distressing reverses and defeats. Whatever else may fail, this trust of ours in the Almighty plan and purpose cannot. If in Nature the elements are never wasted, but to the utmost fulfil their mission, how much rather shall the light of truth, the love that distils as the gentle

dew, the power that works within us mightily, prevail to the sublime end to which they are sent? If the material and political workers for society counted unsuccessful are yet its benefactors how much more are, the broken-hearted soldiers of Christ real though secret conquerors? If the vain striving of one generation in things secular is brought to completion by the next, how much more the spiritual striving? If the martyrs of science, industry, and patriotism do not die in vain, is it not still more sure that the blood of the spiritual martyrs shall prevail?

2. *The flowing tide of the divine will and purpose steadily bears us onward to the glorious goal, whatever may be our difficulties and disasters.* Ours is the main current of the cosmical movement, although from time to time it presents the aspect of a backwater. We are satisfied that God is with us despite our frailty and failure. A breath of His converts our impotent efforts into decisive endeavours; a touch of His converts our blundering essays into masterpieces; He multiplies the few into many, and makes the small strong as the angel of Jehovah. Behind paltry revenues, frail instruments, erring agents, the divine power works with irresistible efficiency. Not only so, but God is in the midst of His enemies, confounding their counsels, thwarting their efforts, laughing to scorn their malice. A plan has been recently developed by the municipalities of the Niagara frontier for the building of a vast tunnel to provide for the disposal of the sewage of a large city, and at the same time to make it produce electric power; the malodorous refuse will first light the city, and the remainder will be converted into fertilizers to enrich and beautify the landscape. It is a parable of the divine government. God is ever bringing light out of darkness, beauty out of rottenness, good out

of evil. He makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder shall He restrain.

Various systems and movements which cause us anxiety sometimes present the appearance of progress when there is no reality of progress, for they are contrary to the great tides of God's purpose and operation. When Parry attempted to reach the North Pole, he discovered that the ice-floes on which he was journeying drifted southward faster than he and his companions walked north; so at the end of a long day's march they found themselves four miles farther from their destination than they were in the morning. It is sometimes thus with systems, institutions, and movements of an equivocal character, which appear to advance when in reality they do nothing of the sort. It is an illusion; they move in the wrong direction, the tide is against them; they are making northward to the realms of darkness and barrenness, whilst the river of God sets southward to the lands of the sun and summer. Systems of scepticism like Voltairianism, of superstition like Mohammedanism, of corrupt ecclesiasticism like Romanism, may seem now and again to advance; but the prevailing currents are against them, and in a century it becomes evident that they are farther from their goal than at the commencement. If our face is to the South, if we strive for light, righteousness, purity, and peace, for the bringing in of the kingdom of God, the mighty tide is with us, and, notwithstanding the agitations and eddies of the moment, we draw nearer the golden shore.

> Boundless as ocean's tide,
> Rolling in fullest pride
> Through the world far and wide,

the Divine Spirit urges forward the Ark of God to the haven of that new earth for which we sigh and pray.

XVI

THE SNARE OF UNREALITY

In the meantime . . . He began to say unto His disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.—LUKE xii. 1.

WITH the exception of our Lord's parable, 'leaven' invariably stands in the gospel for a pernicious element or quality, and in the text it suggests the defect of the Pharisaical profession and character—the Pharisee was a hypocrite, an actor. Against such unreality our Lord warns us. Mark the urgency, 'first of all.' He assigns the premier place to sincerity in whatever concerns the religious life, nothing true and abiding can be reached without it. To attain to right belief, to enjoy a satisfying experience, to achieve worthy character and the high rewards of the perfected life, our belief in righteousness must be sincere; we must honestly strive personally to become righteous, and to prove in practical life our integrity by living righteously. Affectation of any kind is wholly alien to the kingdom of God. Our Lord is Himself 'The Truth,' and the first condition of discipleship is that we trust in Him and follow Him with an unfeigned faith. In the first place, then, we inquire wherein this unreality consists; and, secondly, mark the signs of truthfulness of character.

I. We inquire *wherein this unreality of character consists*. What, in the judgement of Jesus, was the essential reality of character? Does He not state

this in His conversation with the Samaritan woman? 'God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth' (John iv. 24). Nothing is real to Him, nothing acceptable, that is not of the soul; the true worship, the true virtue, the true obedience, are prompted by intelligence, reverence, and love; and whatever does not partake of spiritual feeling and purpose is negligible or worse. True religion from beginning to end is concerned with God—the living, loving, righteous One who has been made known to us in Jesus Christ. The whole design of the teaching of our Lord was to bring us to the knowledge of God, to restore us to a just relation to Him, to awaken in our heart a passionate love of Him, to strengthen us that we might, as He did, fulfil all righteousness. Godliness and righteousness are of the very essence of Christian doctrine, its law, its life, its glory. The true saint lives in the presence of God, drawing his strength daily from Him, seeking in all things to please Him, offering all his works to Him, and finding the smile of God the full and final satisfaction of life. Religion necessarily has its shell, but its kernel is its spirituality.

Exactly at this point we come upon the fatal defect of the Pharisee, upon that special fault which laid him open to such severe condemnation. We cannot read what our Lord has to say about the sect without being aware of their many and serious vices; but these, one and all, are to be traced to the same root, their lack of faith in God and their ignorance of His righteousness. Their religiousness was personal, social, ecclesiastical, mechanical, not divine; in a word, their goodness was no longer real; the reality had gone out of it; it had become a superficial, an artificial, a false thing. They mimicked sainthood; they

became actors, hypocrites, assuming a character that did not belong to them.

Let us study them more closely. In his defence before Agrippa, St. Paul testified that before his conversion, 'After the straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee' (Acts xxvi. 5). So it would appear, as we might readily suppose, that there existed several grades of the order, some more lax, others more austere. Let us consider them in two great sections, and see how they merited the stigma with which they were branded. Evidently many of them were little more than vulgar religious impostors. Whilst maintaining a reputation for orthodoxy and saintship, their conduct was grossly immoral; they were dishonest, avaricious, impure, oppressive. They were deliberate actors; with paste, paint, and powder they prepared to play the saint on the public stage, whilst behind the curtain they were infamous. I remember when a child that a travelling theatre visited my native town, and with wonder and awe I watched the promenading on the outside stage—kings, queens, conquerors, cardinals, courtiers, all arrayed in purple and cloth of gold, decked with diadems, glittering with gems, shining in the colours of the rainbow; but what a disenchantment it was to me to recognize a few days later Julius Caesar on the dockside carrying deals! Thus these pietists conducted an elaborate masquerade; tricked out in sacerdotal raiment, skilled in gesture, loud in utterance, they played to the gallery, whilst utterly devoid of the virtues they affected, and false to the spirit of the part they aped.

They were ostentatious churchmen; but their elaboration and obtrusion of the ecclesiastical did not mean increased stringency of behaviour, a more austere

ideal of character, but, on the contrary, was made a substitute for personal character, a disguise for moral disgrace. Far from all this was the teaching of our Lord. The pre-eminence of character was the burden of His ministry. However lofty His doctrine, it was ever practical: what we ought to be, and how we ought to act, even in the homeliest relations, in the simplest duties, in the lowliest things. Churchmanship has little place in His instructions; character is the jewel, and its diamond-glory His constant theme. Alas, when we come to make the ecclesiastical the main question, and its exaggeration a disguise for moral poverty and corruption! At certain periods of our national history ignorant or dishonest rulers tampered with the currency; they mixed a few ounces of pure metal with abounding alloy, and streams of base money were put into circulation. Money-theorists were at hand to justify the fraud. They argued, Why should not money be taken as it is proclaimed? What if it were copper? What if it were lead or brass? What if it were leather? Is it not all one, seeing it is for no other use but exchange? When the king's stamp was on the coin, it should be received of every man as it was proclaimed. But, as Froude makes clear, all this sophistry proved unavailing; experience showed that good and bad money, though stamped alike, could not exist together. It was demonstrated that the coin must be pure. The image and superscription of the king were valid and accepted only when stamped on sterling metal. It was the mission of the Lord Jesus to make manifest that no conventional decree, no ecclesiastical court, no theological sanction, no sacerdotal mint or imprint, can endow base character with value; the King's image is legitimate only

when stamped on gold—otherwise the divine name is profaned. Churchmanship minus holiness of spirit and deed is one of the vainest forms of vanity. Ecclesiastical virtue is no substitute for natural virtue ; conventional virtue for vital virtue ; or verbal virtue for that which is practical. These Pharisees were theatrical ; they professed a character they did not exemplify, in which they did not believe.

St. Paul is an example of the better class of these sectarians, who did not, like their coarser brethren, substitute rouge for righteousness. They were men who 'lived in all good conscience,' who 'concerning the law were blameless' ; not only were they faultless in regard to the Levitical law, but no doubt many of them might boast with the rich young ruler concerning the precepts of the moral law that they had observed them from their youth upward. The description that the apostle gives of himself as a Pharisee shows how excellent and zealous these men might be, and undoubtedly many of them were. And yet the warning of the Lord against the leaven of the Pharisees applies also to them of the better class. In fact, our Lord never distinguishes in His denunciations of this sect between the groups composing it ; they were all alike in the fact that they assumed to be what they were not. In the last analysis the moral Pharisee was an actor ; he took himself to be other than he was, to be far more than he was. The leaven worked so subtly that they mistook their hollow virtue for a divine righteousness. They thought the whole obligation of life was discharged by a facile compliance with the letter of the law. One of Michael Angelo's workmen employed on the mausoleum of Julius II. thought that he had become a great sculptor without special

effort, because by implicitly following his master's instructions he had produced from a block of marble, to his astonishment, a beautiful statue. But in reality this workman was no sculptor whilst he pursued his task, neither was he one when he had finished it. From first to last he was a journeyman, his work a matter of imitation and measurement, not a gleam of the divine spark. It is the same in ethics as in artistry. The pride of the Pharisee was his outward compliance with law whilst destitute of the genius of righteousness—the consent, the inspiration, the delight of a pure heart. The Hebrew moralist was no more a righteous man than Angelo's amateur was a sculptor; they alike followed a programme that concerned only the surface of things; there was no expression of the inner life. In neither case was their work a creation of the soul, and the mechanical compliance with precepts, altogether lacking in inwardness and spontaneity, was as far removed from genuine art and righteousness as the screaming phrases of a caged parrot are from the skylark's exuberant music.

Scientists, in treating of mimicry in the animal world, inform us that however close may be the resemblance that for the purpose of protection one creature acquires of another, the imitation is external and visible only, never extending to internal characters, or to such as do not affect the external appearance. The Pharisee carried the art of mimicry to its last refinement; but when his outward aspect most nearly reflected the saint, the imitation never extended to the internal characters—the pure heart, the willing mind, the responsive will, the obedient spirit; whatever the visible similarity, the answering realities of the soul were absent. Of a religion of truth, justice, and love,

of faith in God and charity to man, calling out all the passion, power, and poetry of our nature, these men, obsessed by legalism and formalism, knew little. Hence the cutting reproaches with which our Lord visited them. The making clean of the outside of the cup and platter, the washing of hands, the whited sepulchre full of uncleanness, were figures setting forth the contrast between their saintly pretensions, and the unpurged passions, the unregenerate will, the insincerities and dishonesties of their secret life.

It is being constantly objected, If the life is in agreement with the letter of the law, if practically men are blameless, why insist on these mystical conditions? 'He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.' But how does this kind of talk sound when applied to art? Are we prepared to say that the poet cannot be wrong if his metre is right, or the painter if his drawing is right, or the sculptor if his measurements are right, or the musician if his time is right? We never argue so. However correct they may be technically, we cannot tolerate a wooden actor, a formal artist, a frigid poet, or a mechanical minstrel; the unpardonable sin in the world of art is soullessness. This was the defect of the Pharisee that evoked the displeasure of the Lord; his religion was soulless. Vinet, in pointing out defects of Voltaire's poetry, remarks, 'Counterfeit enthusiasm gives counterfeit poetry, and Voltaire never rose to enthusiasm—a contemplation simple, full, and ravishing, the most noble condition in which the human soul can be found.' This was the defect of the Pharisee on the religious side. He never rose to the most noble condition in which the human soul can be found, that of spiritual admiration, love, and delight; his religion did not go beyond tradition, calculation, form; and his counterfeit enthusiasm

produced counterfeit worship, morality, and philanthropy, counterfeit everything. If cold correctness is intolerable to us, how abhorrent must be the worship and virtue that have in them no breath of life, no heart-throb, to Him who knows all being and action in their essence, and whose first and supreme demand upon the creature is, 'My son, give Me thy heart'!

The final, decisive proof of the falsity of the Pharisee was his rejection of our Lord. Had he known the beauty of holiness, he would not have been blind to the glory of Messiah; but when he saw Him, 'there was no beauty that he should desire Him.' Had he been of the truth, he would have recognized incarnate Truth. 'To this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice' (John xviii. 37). They crucified Him.

> They will not, therefore cannot, do not know Him.
> Nothing they could know, could be God. In sooth,
> Unto the true alone exists the truth.

Here, then, is the grand touchstone of character. 'Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God' (1 John iv. 2, 3).

II. We note *the signs of truthfulness in character.*

Humility is of the essence of noble character, and the more nearly it approaches perfection the more unassuming it becomes; elation belongs, alike mentally and morally, to the poverty that deceives itself. The Pharisee had two reasons for the pride by which he was distinguished—his goodness was his own; and, such as it was, it was perfect. He was self-made, self-sufficient, self-satisfied. And Jesus 'spake also this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that

they were righteous, and set all others at nought' (Luke xviii. 9). 'The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get' (11, 12). God is introduced as a background to ensure sufficient prominence to the sorry figure of the self-worshipper who dominates the whole picture. He is the sole builder of the proud structure of his excelling personality; its graces are of his own fashioning; its abounding merit is strictly his own. The self-made man is always a sorry creature; the self-made saint sorriest of all. How vast the difference is between this mood, and the experience of the real saint we see in St. Paul. 'Not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith' (Phil. iii. 9). 'For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, that no man should glory. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works' (Eph. ii. 8, 9). Measureless is the chasm between the creations of God and the compositions of man; but whatever the contrast in the material realm, it is as nothing compared with that between the decorum of the pietist and the righteousness of God; the latter the eternal verity, the former a mere artifice faintly reflecting the vital reality. Said Constable, 'Nothing can exceed the beauty of the country; it makes pictures appear sad trumpery.' Ah, it will not do to look at our work in the light of God's work, especially our moral work. So St. Paul was humbled in his own sight, and acknowledged all that was really good in him was purely

and entirely of the grace of God. So with all true saints.

Another reason we assigned in explanation of the conceit of the Pharisee was that his fancied goodness was perfect. He had done everything that it was his duty to do, realized every possible perfection. We referred to the workman of Michael Angelo who thought he had become a great sculptor because by following his master's instructions he had produced a beautiful statue. We have seen that it was a vain inference, and that he was no artist at all. But the point to emphasize is that the deluded fellow became proud of himself, and began to strut. The reason for his vain-glorying is not difficult to understand. He had no high aim, no fine ideal, and consequently no sense of inadequacy, incompleteness, or failure, and therefore accepted himself as a master. His was the ignoble satisfaction that accompanies low endeavour. How entirely different with Angelo! He was obsessed by an ideal that mocked his most skilful execution. A splendid vision of truth, beauty, and perfection ever haunted him, so that he felt painfully the infelicity of his creations, and left no finished work either in sculpture, architecture, or painting. Thus is it with all great masters. As a French critic avows, 'Born painters never believe they have succeeded.' Here is the explanation of the reserve and diffidence of genius, for the self-respect of the gifted is wholly distinct from the gaseousness of the amateur. When St. Paul was yet a Pharisee he proposed to follow the letter of the law, and, having kept all its precepts from his youth up, he had no sense of failure, nothing to regret, only an emotion of pride in an attained perfection; he anticipated Angelo's workman. But having renounced

his own righteousness for the righteousness of God, having awoke to the spirituality of the law and to the patern of character in Christ, he henceforth panted after an infinite purity and beauty, and was ever humbled to know how far short of it he fell. His heavenly vision left him abased in his own sight, with a discontent nobler than that of the baffled Angelo. So are we ever chastened when we measure ourselves against the commandment that is exceeding high and broad. Emerson is right: 'Whenever the vein of thought reaches down into the profound there is no danger from vanity.' We may justly mistrust ourselves whilst the faintest emotion of spiritual pride arises in our heart and finds entertainment there. By the grace of God we were made His sons, by His Spirit are we sanctified, by His power are we kept, and it is humiliating to know how far we still fall short of His great salvation. We are truest, safest, highest, when lowliest at the Master's feet.

Modesty is a kindred symptom of truthfulness. The design of the artificial is to impose itself as the real, and in the attempt usually falls into the error of over-emphasis, over-colouring, over-doing, striving to accredit itself, the counterfeit waxes loud and lurid—the artificial flower outreddens the garden rose. This affectation that so easily becomes a caricature was another sinister characteristic of the Pharisee. The trumpet, the street-corner, the disfigured face, the broad phylactery, the effort to impress betrayed the unreal and their consciousness of it. Reality is content with itself, leaving the fact to tell its own story, or to remain unknown. The Creator never appears obtrusively in the creation. His works speak for themselves, and thus best speak for Him. The great Reality is

invisible; or, in the paradox of Victor Hugo, 'God is the invisible evident.' The modesty of Nature reappears in the spirit of our Lord, in whose life and ministry there is no trace of ostentation, only a manifest desire to avoid whatever savoured of it. We do not wonder, therefore, that His severest censure is passed upon the pietists who courted the limelight. 'How can ye believe, which receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not?' (John v. 44). How anxiously He strives to bring His hearers face to face with God, that they may find in Him, and in Him alone, their motive, strength, and reward! And the truest men are content with this. 'There are souls who die out, after burning with unsurpassable moral beauty and grandeur, without ever having found a way, and even without ever having felt the need, of revealing themselves to others,' writes George Sand. Such is truth and reality. It is good before God, approved of Him, blessed by Him, and therefore asks no further witness, does not feel the need of any other. The sentient flower born to blush unseen is content in its own sweetness; the thinking jewel in the depths, reposing in its own pure ray, does not crave the sun. We may well suspect our genuineness when the opinions, praises, and rewards of men occupy much of our thought or affect our actions. Happy are we if the smile of God be our quest, our inspiration, and our exceeding great reward.

Greatness is another attribute of the sincere. In the absence of the substantial thing or principle, men exaggerate the details; the immaterial is paraded as an apology or a disguise for the lack of the material. He who is conscious of faithfulness to sovereign truths and principles is little troubled about finesse;

loyal to the highest, he knows the rest will follow in just sequence and proportion. On this score of pedantry our Lord impeaches the Pharisee. 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, judgement, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone' (Matt. xxiii. 23). We often meet with this subtle device in history. During the terrible days of the French Revolution young men were forbidden by the Commune to bathe near the bridges—'Modesty is required; a republic is the aegis of virtue'—whilst all the time they kept the guillotine hard at work "grinding red!" So sensitive on a question of delicacy, so monstrous regarding the cardinal law! In the individual life we similarly delude ourselves, officiously insisting on the details of duty whilst discounting the more serious obligations. The pettifogging spirit was far indeed from our Lord—His very greatness of mind and ministry forbade it; and yet what a conspicuous place the mint, the anise, and the cummin have had in His Church! As faithful followers of our Master, our intellect must be exercised on the highest truths, our conscience charged with the great things of the law, our heart enlarged with the divine charity, our action regulated by lofty considerations, and our soul animated by glorious reasons and hopes; and whilst we live intent on the weightier matters, with large horizons, and active in great causes, nothing of real significance will be left undone.

Humanity is the unfailing sign of true character. A great historian tells us that the fatal defect of the Greek was that in his intellectual conceit he despised the humble; the more fatal defect of the Pharisee

was that in his religious conceit he did the same thing. He accounted himself the porcelain, consigning his poor brethren as broken earthenware to the rubbish of the void. Although politically the Pharisees were supposed to represent the democracy, yet in fact they were utterly lacking in sympathy and helpfulness. They show glaringly the hatefulness of spiritual pride and inhumanity. More haughty than the pride of birth, more arrogant than that of fortune, more contemptuous than that of learning, more cruel than that of power, is the pride of the pious. So long as the religious associate themselves with the multitude that they may help and bless, they are a blessing indeed; but to constitute themselves a sacred caste, inflated with supercilious pride, and disdainful of the humble, is to create the most accursed form of aristocracy the world has ever known. This was the reason that our Lord treated the Pharisee with unexampled severity. Their spirit was the antithesis of His own. Much controversy has raged through the ages as to the personality of Antichrist; but Antichrist is a spirit; it is the egotism that passes by on the other side, leaving the needy friendless and perishing. The doctrine that the great may despise the humble, exploit the weak, crush the defenceless, has been rather popular lately in certain quarters; but the last place in which it should be entertained is in His Church who 'came to seek and to save that which was lost.' Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, of the spirit that puffs up, that isolates, that renders callous. The reality of greatness is best demonstrated in its stoop; and the genuineness of goodness is best estimated as we test it by His example who made the profoundest stoop of all. In the depth, richness, and power of our spirit of pity, compassion, and

sacrifice do we discover one of the most reliable proofs of the reality of our discipleship.

Grace is the expression of truth. Truthfulness is of the essence of all beauty, and it is so specially in relation to character. Without truth, truth in the inward parts, no matter how cleverly superior character may be counterfeited, there is manifest failure; however the dissembler may deceive himself, he seldom deceives any one else permanently. On the contrary, the really sincere may lack bodily grace, a happy expression, culture; yet, despite superficial imperfections, society discerns in them a strength, a pleasantness, a worthiness not to be mistaken. The final truth is that the true is the beautiful and the false the ugly, whilst the higher the grade to which a thing belongs the more intolerable is the fake. History relates how the hollow virtue of the Greek and Roman stoic was mocked by the discerning; and the pretentiousness of the Pharisee was similarly despised. At once he made himself and sainthood odious. And the opposite is equally true, that they who 'adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things' are respected, trusted, admired, loved, by all who know them. 'He shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon' (Hosea xiv. 5, 6). We may believe in ourselves as we share the sweetness of Sharon's rose.

'Looking unto Jesus': all these glorious attributes —humility, modesty, greatness, humanity, loveliness— are seen in Him in their highest perfection. Let us, then, wait at His feet, welcome His grace, test ourselves by His truth, until by His Spirit we are changed into His likeness.

XVII

THE BLIGHT OF UNBELIEF

And Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the . . . . Sadducees.—MATT. xvi. 6.

ON this occasion we are concerned with the latter part of our Lord's warning, and it is necessary first of all that we clearly understand the doctrinal position of the Sadducees. What was the nature of the teaching that our Lord denounces in our text? Its characteristic features were the denial of the supernatural, and its faith in the sufficiency of the present life. Here was the core of the Sadducean creed. They denied the spirituality of human nature, holding that the soul dies with the body. They denied the spiritual principle in human life, contending that our whole good consists in rank and wealth, in property and dominion, in fashion and indulgence. They denied the spiritual element in revelation, contenting themselves with a formal obedience to the letter of the law. 'Jesus said unto them, Is it not for this cause that ye err, that ye know not the scriptures, nor the power of God?' (Mark xii. 24). It was the one thing they prided themselves upon knowing, but the Master showed how they missed its deeper signification. They denied the spiritual factor in history, affirming the supremacy of the human will in the determination of all events, and rejecting the hope of a divine goal to the travail of the ages. They denied the spirituality of worship, for whilst their rank and fortune were based

on their ecclesiastical pre-eminence, their entire religious system was formal and financial. Finally, they denied the spiritual universe and man's high destination therein, not believing in angel or spirit, in the resurrection of the dead, or in the life everlasting. They had no really great hope for humanity either in this world or in that which is to come. In a word, the Sadducees were thoroughly men of this world, intensely, exclusively secular, finding whatever was necessary or desirable in this mortal life, in material wealth, social honour, sensuous gratification, temporal success and glory. The eternal universe was recognized just as far as it was a source of worldly aggrandizement, a lucrative fiction; little beyond was deemed worthy of notice. A witty Frenchman remarks that 'A deist is an atheist with an eye to the off-chance of some advantage.' Such were the Sadducees. The creed, spirit, and life of these people were directly contrary to the genius of our Lord, whose mission on earth was to spiritualize all our conceptions concerning human nature, to restore our relation to God, to confirm our faith in His word and government, to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth, to assure us that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses, and to fit us for that immortality which by the gospel He brings to light. The two ideals are profoundly at variance; no contrast could be more absolute or complete.

The Sadducee is with us still, the generation which ignores the supernatural and concentrates itself on the here and now. Given health, prosperity, and friendship, many find the world a very pleasant place to live in; they have no wants or aspirations that it does not supply. They complain that deep mystery enshrouds mystical beliefs and hopes; therefore they

conclude that it is the truest wisdom to make the most of the present, to get out of it what sweetness we may, and then leave it without regret or expectation.

It is our purpose, then, in the present discourse to expose the unreasonableness and fatal influence of unbelief in the highest things, and to assert the benign influence of a spiritual faith upon human nature and life.

I. The Unreasonableness of Unbelief.—It is well that we define what we mean by unbelief. Michelet rightly observes, 'Between belief and unbelief there are infinite gradations, innumerable intermediates,' all the distance between a faint acquiescence and a contemptuous rejection. The unbelief that the New Testament condemns is the rejection of spiritual doctrine, after it has been approached and treated in the spirit of prejudice and antagonism. All it asks is a fair, unbiased consideration. It has been well said that 'suspended judgement is the greatest triumph of intellectual discipline'; and this approved position of the searcher after the truth of naturalism, which is far removed from the mood of scepticism, is the frame of mind that revelation demands in the religious inquirer. It asks for the same balance of mind as that in which students approach the problems of philosophy and science. It is impossible that we should gain a correct view of any question if we come to its consideration in a spirit of obstinate doubtfulness and hostility, and specially good reasons exist for treating religious questions with candour and sympathy. The Bereans were ideal critics who set the pattern for criticism for all time; they sought to ascertain 'whether these things were so,' not with a bias to prove that these things were *not* so.

It is sometimes assumed that doubt is the temper in

which thinkers approach the problems of *philosophy*; but, in fact, this is not true of the successful student. When he sets out to discover a reasoned account of the universe, he does so, not with a secret or active scepticism, but with a certain latent faith and expectation. Martensen writes: 'Dogmatics does not make *doubt* its starting-point, as philosophy is often required to do; it is not developed out of the void of scepticism, but out of the fullness of faith. . . . It springs out of the capacity of faith to unfold from its own depths a wealth of treasures of wisdom and of knowledge, to build up a kingdom of acknowledged truths.'[1] Yet, strictly speaking, doubt is no more the starting-point of philosophy than it is of theology; neither is philosophy developed out of a void of scepticism, but out of a reality of faith, whether it is the fullness of faith or not. In a letter to Lord Farrer, Darwin writes: 'If we consider the whole universe, the mind refuses to look at it as the outcome of chance—that is, without design and purpose.'[2] Faith was the starting-point of Darwin's philosophy, an instinctive belief in the rationality of the universe. When he came to deal with any particular theory of the cosmos he would hesitate, reflect, determine; but he began with the faith that some Power had organized it with all it expressed of wisdom and beauty. 'By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear' (Heb. xi. 3). Not formally, but substantially, this was the faith Darwin was constrained to allow, the beginning and moulder of his philosophy. With a compelling faith, with profound obstinate instinctive beliefs, thinkers approach the great problem, and out of a reality of faith, not

[1] *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 3. [2] *More Letters*, vol. i., p. 395.

out of a void of scepticism, are the prevailing philosophies developed.

Neither is doubt the starting-point of *science,* nor in the spirit of doubt is it successfully cultivated. Sir Oliver Lodge has written somewhere, ' Incredulity and disbelief are not really scientific attributes; inquiry and scepticism are '—the meaning of the latter part of the definition being that inquiry and caution are scientific attributes, for obviously by scepticism he does not mean disbelief. In seeking to interpret phenomena his temper is not that of suspicion and opposition, but of alertness and expectancy. He is not blinded by presuppositions, but prepared for whatever experiment may reveal, even when the result is most unexpected. The use of the imagination in research is commended and urged by leading scientists, and the exercise of this faculty is in close analogy with that spiritual imagination called faith, by the aid of which we seize the higher truths. The active sympathetic imagination seeking truth in the material realm is palpably more akin to faith than it is to scepticism. Scientists themselves admit the fact that the spirit of incredulity has interfered with the entire success of able experimentalists. This lack of confidence and courage limited the triumphs of the famous Boyle himself. Sir Henry Holland informs us of the failure of Wollaston, the great chemist. ' The habitual scepticism of his mind was a hindrance to his own scientific career. This was strikingly shown in the circumstances attending the discovery of the metal Palladium; and at a later time in relation to the greater discovery of the electro-magnetic rotation. Though the first to denote the dark lines in the solar-spectrum, the germ of so many later researches, he did not himself carry the observation

further. That aid which hypothesis, duly limited, renders to experimental inquiry, he unduly disdained and put aside. He would have accomplished more had he doubted less.'[1]

Neither is doubt the starting-point of *religion*, and we ought not to make it so. We have indeed strong reasons to the contrary. Just as the initiative and justification of philosophy are an instinctive persuasion of the reality of truth, of the rationality of the universe; just as the scientist starts with an inborn conviction of the reality, unity, and order of Nature, and out of this primal faith develops a wealth of wisdom and knowledge which is the intellectual glory of our age; so we have a natural faith in supernatural truths, which, however dim at first, will, when properly cultivated, lead to the vision splendid. We are often reminded of the animal relics which survive in our constitution, souvenirs of the jungle; but what is much more manifest, and infinitely more important, is, how our nature abounds in prophetic instincts, in large spiritual capacities and longings. The doctrines of revelation appealing to faith are not strange, irrelevant, superfluous articles, but are immediately related to our needs, experiences, aspirations. Our consciousness of sin, the struggle of our double nature, the longing of the whole man for deliverance from the power of sin and from the evils which originate in it, the need of moral strength, the need of consolation in deep suffering, the passion of life and immortality form a basis for belief in the fitness and preciousness of the gospel salvation. Revelation does not prescribe specifics that we do not need, nor postulate prizes to which we do not aspire; but supplies the medicines for our maladies,

[1] *Recollections of Past Life*, p. 81.

satisfies the cravings of the soul, realizes the great ideas of the mind.

By a materialistic, sensual, or worldly life, and the sophistry which goes with it, the reason and conscience may be so perverted as to deny all supernaturalism; but even then the spiritual instincts continue to assert themselves, and involve the sceptic in endless perplexity and inconsistency. 'What puzzles me is the intense sympathy Whittier forces me to feel for religious emotions I do not share, and for a simple faith, which I know to be a delusion, to be philosophically all wrong. It is like hearing a great congregation singing, "Nearer, my God, to Thee." No one can hear it without feeling his heart swell—whether he believes in a soul or not.'[1] 'The *Sanctus* of Beethoven, sung to-day after lunch, made me undergo a nervous emotion, and sent tears to my eyes. These religious chants stir up in me all the pains of my past life, and I, the sceptic, the unbeliever, on whom the eloquence of the flesh could have no effect, I feel that I could be converted by plain-song or by the music which comes of it.'[2] So inevitable and inextinguishable are the spiritual affinities and demands of human nature; by logical legerdemain we cheat the brain, but the hunger of the heart is not to be denied.

What system gives equal promise with Christianity to meet the questionings and aspirations of humanity, or to deal effectually with our maladies, sorrows, and perils? The great Teacher taught with supreme authority, 'full of grace and truth,' and all His teachings are as profound as the heart itself. No system of philosophy or science ever came to men accredited

[1] Lafcadio Hearn, *Japanese Letters*, p.149.
[2] *Journal of the de Goncourts.*

as is the gospel. It appeals to our highest nature, on the highest grounds, with sincerity, power, sympathy, and faithfulness. 'Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that Thou art the Holy One of God' (John vi. 68, 69). It is in the utmost degree unreasonable not to give Him an attentive and sympathetic hearing. 'And He marvelled because of their unbelief' (Mark vi. 6). After all that He had taught and wrought, speaking as man never spoke, working in deeds of incomparable power and compassion, exhibiting a life of wondrous purity, self-sacrifice, and patience, they remained unaffected and hostile. In the face of the accumulated evidences for His divine nature and doctrine supplied by nearly two thousand years, can He be less amazed at the unbelief of our generation?

II. The Fatal Practical Influence of Unbelief.—What was the effect of denying the spiritual conception of life, of concentrating attention upon the present, of excluding all reference to a higher world and a future life? How does this practical atheism work? Great claims are often made for secularism; we are assured that, if we once got rid of theological notions, we should be surprised at an outburst of great character and of public freedom, prosperity, and happiness; our religion being a deadweight on mind, energy, and enterprise. Does history sanction this theory? Does the account that it renders of the character of the Sadducee, his social and political influence, confirm these sanguine views of secularism? We think not.

The *personal character* of the Sadducee was not raised by his disbelief. The type of man fashioned

by the terrestrial creed is far from exciting admiration. Judging them by the designation they assumed, 'the righteous,' 'the pious,' we might reasonably expect great things; but the practical outcome is most disappointing. They professed a severe adhesion to the Mosaic law; it was their boast that they held strictly to its letter, making no addition to it as the Pharisee did; but they treated it with great independence, rationalizing it, and in effect making it void. In theory their creed was that of Moses; in fact it was that of Epicurus. Greek philosophy and culture had been largely adopted by the Hebrew, and the Sadducee was specially influenced by them. He asserted that man's aim and end was limited to earth, and that he finds his resurrection in his children; the true destiny of existence is to be sought in a pleasant life, in riches and honour, in leaving a posterity, and in dying without fear or hope for soul or body. Substantially the pagan creed of the Epicurean. A selfish, sensual, temporal existence, to be made as free from pain and disturbance as possible. How contrary to the teaching of Jesus!

In St. John's Gospel (xii. 20) we read of certain Greeks who had come up to the Passover Feast wishing to see Jesus. Schmiedel complains of the colourless way in which the scene is sketched. The two disciples, Philip and Andrew, seek to introduce the strangers; but what is the sequel? Whether the Greeks were admitted to see Him, what they said, what Jesus said to them—about all this we hear nothing.[1] What follows in the record, it is suggested, is entirely irrelevant. But is it so? 'And Jesus answereth them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I

[1] *The Johannine Writings*, Translation by Canney, p. 78.

say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal' (23–25). Here was a reply to the Greeks, a direct contradiction to the worldly egoistic philosophy with which these strangers were familiar, of which perhaps they were disciples. Through self-denial the greatest benefits were to accrue to the individual and the race. All that was vital to souls and society must arise out of renunciation, humiliation, sacrifice. He who weakly loves his soul, pampering and indulging it in animal pleasure and vanity, loses it. He who wisely hates his soul, repressing and denying its tendencies to earth and sin, preserves it to life eternal. Egotism is an ignoble and a fundamental heresy. Yet such was the creed of the Epicurean, the creed of the Sadducee. The deepest witness of the human heart agrees with the teaching of our Lord; for however we may flatter those who do well to themselves, we hold their sordid spirit and life in contempt. The Oriental paints in his own fashion the selfish worldling, intent on material reward and temporal felicity, no great or generous purpose in his soul. 'The wretched man who in this busy world does not practise devotion, only cooks weeds in a jewelled saucepan; or ploughs his fields with a golden plough, only to sow tares; or fences his land with a hedge after cutting down his camphor-trees, only to grow wild grain.' He has renounced the really precious things for the comparatively worthless, and such characters, however big their barns or considerable their goods, are never objects of admiration; the instinctive homage of the heart is reserved for men of an altogether different type.

As the central principle of the Sadducees was false, his conduct was correspondingly lax. That they were hated by the people for their haughtiness of spirit and the cruel severity of their judgements, and that they were intolerant and fierce amongst themselves, is placed on record by Josephus. That they lapsed into gross indulgence is equally certain. 'Sadduceeism, in particular, lacked the anxious attention to purity which occasioned the gulf between Pharisaism and Rome. They were charged with unlawful, sensual, and indeed impure habits of life.'[1] 'The general nature of this school can be recognized with tolerable confidence. It was the school of freedom of life, of thought and action; but it was a freedom which sprang out of the Greek age with its deep moral degradation, which corresponded with it, and was acceptable to it.'[2] The luxury, voluptuousness, and licence of these Hebrew ecclesiastics would seem to have anticipated the moral condition of the Court of the Renascence Popes. Whilst they embellished their lives by foreign art and culture, they corrupted and dishonoured themselves by imbibing the spirit and adopting the vices which accompanied these adornments. History has made very clear the ghastly moral degradation which prevailed in the realm of Greek civilization, speedily destroying it; and the Epicureanism of the Jew would not prove less fatal. As in Eastern jungles orchids flourish whose most delicate and beautiful blossoms distil scents with the pungency of carrion, so the most repulsive vices affront us amid all the intellectual and artistic brilliance of an atheistic and a secular age. History gives no encouragement to expect pure, noble, heroic lives in that atmosphere. It shows most convincingly

[1] Keim. [2] Ewald, *History of Israel.*

that when a God of holiness is forgotten, a moral universe ignored, and the spiritual rewards of virtue are no longer sought, human nature soon grows wild, rots, exhausts itself, and perishes.

Neither does the Sadducee show to advantage on the *social* side. It is a plausible contention of secularism that if our whole strength were applied to earthly business it must prove more profitable than when attention is diverted to another world and life. Sir Robert Ball tells us that the problem of the movement of a planet under the influence of two suns is one of the most difficult that has ever been proposed to mathematicians, and it is, indeed, impossible in the present state of analysis to solve with accuracy all the questions which it implies. The secularist finds himself between two worlds, two worlds with contrary attractions, and their reconciliation constitutes a problem that he cannot solve, and the consideration of it only perplexes and paralyses. He therefore determines to focus his whole strength on the world at his feet; this is real, necessary, urgent, and all problems must be postponed. But the plausible theory does not hold in experience; to exclude a higher world does not, in fact, intensify our interest in this. The sect before us furnish an example of this. 'Sadduceeism, to say nothing of a future life, never warmly interested itself in the ideal of the present life,' is the verdict of the historian. They certainly made the best of this life materially so far as their own personal interests were concerned, they were zealous members of the 'lucrative party,' they were rich, occupied the highest offices, lived elegantly and luxuriously; but they were far from making the best of things for the community. They lacked sympathy with the people, and were hated by the

people. Satisfied with their affluent situation, living a pleasant life, they resented the social movement that threatened to disturb their happy circumstances. Isolated from the people, they were jealous of any social aspiration that threatened their monopoly. Disbelief in a higher world and in the things which accompany faith in that world will very probably produce an intense egoist, intent on secular gain ; but the altruistic sentiment which constrains the individual to deny himself for social advantage must come from another source. Of this sentiment the Sadducee was wholly devoid, and his intense devotion to the carnal life made him a blight to society, a curse to his nation.

'Beware of the leaven of the Sadducee!' Do not anticipate that a narrow sordid spirit will ensure social progress or national development. By denying the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of a spiritual faith we take from the individual the principle of development, and from the nations the principle of life and growth. Sadduceeism was a stage in the process of the national dissolution, and must ever constitute such a stage. We cannot make society progressive, a nation great, or a race noble and happy by making the individual small and narrow, and confining him to a sordid, temporal, and animal life. In a speech by Edmund Burke occurs a passage which in its first application was political, but it has also a larger significance. He is arguing that statesmen should ever be mindful in their legislation to take wide and comprehensive views, to remember the greatness of the British Empire, lest their decisions lack proportion and belittle and destroy. 'I think I can trace all the calamities of this country to the single source of our not having steadily before our eyes a comprehensive view of the whole of our dominions, and a just sense

of their true bearings and relations. . . . If we make ourselves too little for the sphere of our duty, if, on the contrary, we do not stretch and expand our minds to the compass of their object, be well assured that everything about us will dwindle by degrees, until at length our concerns are shrunk to the dimensions of our minds. It is not a predilection to mean, sordid, home-bred cares that will avert the consequence of a false estimation of our interest, or prevent the shameful dilapidation into which a great empire must fall by mean reparations upon mighty ruins.' [1] What calamities, then, will follow the contraction of our views to earth and time? What if we make ourselves too little for the sphere of our duty? In that case we may be well assured that everything about us will dwindle by degrees, until our concerns shrink to the dimensions of our minds. If we cease to expand our thought to the vast compass of the divine and eternal, no devotion to 'home-bred cares,' to sordid pursuits, to banks and barns, banquets and balls, will for long avert shameful social and national degeneration. The presence on the stage of a considerable body of atheistic materialists like the Sadducees may always be taken as a proof of national corruption, and as a presage 'that God is about to dissolve an empire.' We cannot dwarf ourselves without degrading our whole estate. A great ideal is the condition of our evolution. Whatever comes within the span of this earthly life, and 'which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal' (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18).

[1] *Speech on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts.*

XVIII

THE LURE OF COMPROMISE

Beware of . . . . the leaven of Herod.—MARK viii. 15.

ALIENS by race, the Herods were Jews in faith, and a marked feature of their dynasty in regard to religion was its temporizing policy. On the one side they sought to conciliate the Jewish people over whom they exercised lordship. Herod the Great built their temple in rare splendour, and in various ways paid deference to the national faith. But by the side of this respect for the Jewish religion was the favour they showed towards heathenism. Side by side with the sanctuary on Zion they built pagan temples, and put the Roman eagle into the very porch of the house of God. They also built theatres and amphitheatres, and introduced gladiatorial contests, not only in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, but, to the horror of the pious, into the holy city itself. To promote the power and glory of their House the Herodians in turn flattered both Jew and Roman. To carry out successfully this delicate policy required much astuteness and unscrupulousness; but father and sons were equal to the occasion, displaying to perfection the necessary cunning. At one stroke our Lord expressed the character of Herod Antipas, and that of his kindred, when 'He said unto them, Go and say to that fox' (Luke xiii. 32).

It is against this double-mindedness that our Lord protests in the text. He warns us against the lack

of sincerity that would hold the truth in unrighteousness, lightly use religion for temporal advantage, and that for the sake of profit, honour, or pleasure would sacrifice solemn convictions. He meant that we should believe in the highest truth, and be prepared to resist every temptation to compromise with error and unrighteousness. Sharply to deny the faith is not so imminent a danger; but a partial surrender of some of its principles and claims may appear as 'practical politics,' as an act, indeed, of superior wisdom and large-mindedness. In the thought of Jesus no prospect of worldly gain or aggrandizement must be allowed to induce us to make the slightest concession to the worldly spirit; we must firmly, sternly, and at all costs, stand by the true, the pure, the highest, for any attempt to adjust our differences with falsity and unrighteousness is full of peril; we have nothing to gain, everything to lose. Our attitude to the whole inferior life must be that of uncompromising hostility.

I. Let us inquire into *the nature of this warning*. 'Leaven of Herod.' What does this mean to us? Against what are we expressly warned?

1. Against the attempt to reconcile *godliness and worldliness*. We know what is to be understood by 'a man of God' and by 'a man of the world.' The psalmist in the seventy-third Psalm gives the portraiture of both, and the New Testament accentuates the delineation. The one recognizing the presence and will of God in all this human life, being regulated by His fear, seeking to please Him, doing all for His glory, using the whole worldly life to spiritual and divine ends; the other, living without the thought of God, self-sufficient, self-willed, using the world as an end in itself, and finding in its ambitions, goods, and pleasures, final satisfaction. Two entirely disparate and

contradictory ideals of life. It is impossible to follow both. Elijah recognized this. 'And Elijah came near unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him' (1 Kings xviii. 21). And our Lord settled this point for ever when He declared, 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon' (Matt. vi. 24). Our Lord was not One readily to admit impossibilities, but even He acknowledged the impossibility of blending in one life the love of God and the love of the world. Napoleon boasted that he had no such word as 'impossible' in his dictionary. Our Lord had! He counted it impossible to live to high spiritual ends, and yet to comply with the spirit and maxims of the carnal life. What He reckoned impossible no wit of man will reconcile.

How emphatically our Lord rejected any attempt to compromise in whatever related to the spiritual kingdom He came to establish! 'And as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, I will follow thee whithersoever Thou goest' (Luke ix. 57). Our Lord immediately reminded him that only those who were prepared to sacrifice all worldly comforts, when they conflict with spiritual loyalty, could be received into His discipleship. 'And he said unto another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father' (verse 59). The prompt and severe reply was that family affection could not be allowed to infringe on spiritual principle and duty. 'And another also said, I will follow Thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house' (verse 61). But the Master responds that one who is not prepared to subordinate social fashions and amenities to spiritual claims is 'not fit for the kingdom of God.' And

when the rich young moralist came to ask eager questions, ' Jesus said unto him, If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that thou hast . . . and come, follow Me ' (Matt. xix. 21). When the rights of property violate the Christian conscience, they must be renounced. So, in all the Epistles, the Churches are warned that salvation was to be secured not by any shrewd opportunism, or adroit trimming for secular safety or gain, but by a readiness to renounce every material and social advantage that came into collision with the faith and fellowship of Christ. Not a nod in the house of Rimmon ; not the casting of a grain of incense on the altar of Mammon. John Bunyan shocks us with the spectacle of The Man in the Iron Cage ; but Demas in a cage of gold is not less appalling ; and Christianity is jealous lest any quality of the soul, in any degree, should be lost through complicity with the treasures, honours, and glory of the world.

2. Our Lord's words are a warning against any attempt to effect an accommodation between *the flesh and the spirit.* In the early age of the Christian Church there was manifest a strong disposition to combine with the Christian profession a certain toleration for pagan indulgence. St. Paul detected this in the Church in Corinth, and solemnly warns the brethren against the seductive tendency. We have seen how Herod the Great attempted to combine Judaism with heathenism ; so in the beginning of the second century the Emperor Hadrian sought to reconcile Christianity and heathenism. He attempted to incorporate Christianity into that great amalgam of various doctrines and rites which constituted at that time the Roman religion. For this purpose he wished to do honour, in his own way,

to the places sacred to the memory of Jesus; he thought it possible to combine the worship of Christ with that of Adonis, which he caused to be celebrated at Bethlehem. He erected upon the Holy Sepulchre an image of Jupiter, and upon Calvary the statue of Venus. In various ways at that period, and for various reasons, the experiment was made of fusing the new faith with the old superstition; perhaps the most audacious instance of the heresy being this combination of the worship of Christ with that of Adonis and the erection of the statue of Venus upon Calvary. But the attempt to satisfy at once the claims of religion and the lusts of the flesh is often being made in more refined ways. Professor J. R. Seeley writes of Goethe: 'The struggle which went on in Goethe's mind through the greater part of his life between two forms of religion; between Christian ideas from which he would never consent to part, and a sort of Heathenism which at times he avowed with the utmost frankness.' At the same period there was in Germany generally a disposition to blend the carnal with the Christian; some doing their utmost to desecrate the holy, whilst others attempted to sanctify the unholy. France has supplied the notorious cases of Chateaubriand, Sainte-Beuve, Victor Hugo, and others. Unhappily such anomalies have not been lacking in our own country, and at the present day there is a distinct movement in the same direction. Once more the worship of the beautiful Adonis in the birthplace of the Saviour, and the image of lust honoured on Mount Calvary! Christian ideas united with the immoralities of idolatry! We are to retain our Christian ideas, but not in the spirit of a narrow and sour Puritanism which fails to do justice to the flesh; we want a broader

culture, one to minister at once to the sensual and the spiritual.

With what an intense insistence does the New Testament condemn the adulterous compact! It takes over the denunciations of the Old Testament against yielding an iota to the spirit of licence, and emphasizes them unsparingly. The Christian Church found itself in the midst of an utterly corrupt state of society, menaced at every possible point by foulness, and it was taught to shrink from the contact as from the touch of a leper. 'Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing' (2 Cor. vi. 17). Not a petal of its voluptuous roses, not a sip of the wine of its fornication, not a leaf of its gay garlands, not an echo of its siren music and song; 'hating the garment spotted by the flesh' even when it is the fine needlework and wrought gold of skilfullest art. The sweet, pure, true life of the Christian saint is an eternity away from the stained pleasure of paganism, however artfully it may be disguised. The celebration of the worship of Adonis and that of Christ, the reconciliation of Venus and the Crucified will be consummated on the day that heaven and hell are reconciled. Until that day we must abstain from 'the cup of devils,' however its brim may be gilded or its wine sparkle.

3. Our text is a warning against the attempt *to combine faith in Christ with alien creeds.* Our Lord demanded confidence in Himself and in His teaching, as no other teacher ever did; confidence in Himself before all others, and to the exclusion of all others. 'Ye believe in God, believe also in Me' (John xiv. 1). When in our text He condemns the leaven of Herod, the implication is that

He knew Himself to be the Truth, the Life, and the Way; and His words are a warning against seeking any doctrine of salvation out of Himself. The Epistle to the Hebrews is a great argument against leaning partly on Christ and partly on other authority. Precious as the Old Testament and the system of worship it enjoined were to the Jews, they were now called upon to put an absolute faith in Him who fulfilled the law and the prophets, and in that spiritual dispensation which He came to establish. The Christian Jews felt the extreme difficulty of cutting themselves entirely free from the ancient worship and associations, but the design of the Epistle is to convince them that their salvation was secure only as they did this; only then were they founded on the rock. The Epistle to the Hebrews is a special admonition to the Christian Church in all generations to refrain from allying its faith with alien creeds, even the very best of them. 'For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. iii. 11).

Yet in successive ages the temptation has proved irresistible, and the Christian theologian again and again has damaged the faith he sought to serve by alloying, in the name of catholicity, the pure gold with some base admixture of alien philosophy and religion. The temptation has been renewed in our day with special force, in consequence of the opening up to us of the sacred writings of the nations; the attempt is being made continually to challenge the uniqueness and supremacy of Christian truth, and to give the ethnic scriptures at least equal rank with the Bible. In *A Journey to Java* the traveller tells how 'the little children brought us large bunches of the water-lily and other flowers. Some posies

were apparently composed of a remarkable and variegated flower that we had not seen before. Not until we had bought and examined them closely did we discover that this many-hued flower was in reality a number of detached petals from various flowers so cleverly fastened together that the collection appeared as one unusual flower.' This faked flower reminds us of the eclectic creed of many people to-day. It is constructed from divers sources, some portions being petals from scriptural plants of truth and grace, cunningly combined with other elements gathered from the wild flowers of the jungle and the wilderness.

There is no reason why we should not recognize and give full value to truth wherever it may be found ; yet it must never be forgotten that ' the saving knowledge of Christ ' stands alone in its majestic authority and sufficiency. With the virtues of the Plant of Renown for our healing and joy we need no resort to artificial combinations. With what jealousy did the apostles guard this truth ! St. Peter at the beginning of the ministry, ' And in none other is there salvation : for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved ' (Acts iv. 12). And St. John at the close of the apostolical period vehemently contended for the intolerance of the gospel. Directly contrary to the catholicity of the Roman who was prepared to give a place to all the gods of the nations in his Pantheon, the Church of Christ insisted on His sovereignty, and would tolerate none other by His side. He is the sole author of our salvation, saving to the uttermost, and it is impious to associate any name with His. ' Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life ' (John. vi. 68).

II. *The justice and need of the warning note of the text* remain for consideration. The temper of compromise is never thoroughly approved in any sphere; it is often allowed with a view of relieving embarrassing situations, but a readiness to agree to compromise is ever felt to be an imperfection. It suggests that the parties concerned are without convictions; or that having convictions, they are lacking in principle; or that they are deficient in the necessary moral strength and courage to assert themselves; it argues more or less of uncertainty, insincerity, inconsistency, irresolution, impotence. In certain circumstances concessions for the sake of peace and progress may be legitimate and even praiseworthy, but as a grand rule temporizing, expediency, opportunism are righteously suspected. As a distinguished writer affirms, 'When compromise broadens, intellect and conscience are thrust into narrower room.'

It is said that compromise is 'the essence of politics'; but that is in consequence of so many political discussions relating to method rather than to principle. The advocates of rival schemes are agreed on the end proposed, but differ in judgement as to the best means for effecting it; it is a question of opinion rather than of conscience, and room is left for mutual concession without sinister implications. But even in this realm it is not long before questions emerge of fundamental right and wrong, and the statesman who now manifests a facile complacency becomes forthwith an object of suspicion and scorn. 'Compromises have never been favoured by men of science,' declares one of their historians. For example, when rival theories as to the nature of light are in the field, the scientist must decide for the corpuscular or the undulatory. There is no logical standing ground between the two; they cannot

be combined ; there is no room for compromise. So with other theories concerning Nature, they are mutually exclusive ; it is impossible to hold more than one. It is much the same with philosophy. The greatest thinkers maintain that a selection and combination from conflicting schemes of thought is no philosophy at all ; just as the faked flower of the Japanese was no flower at all. The true philosopher regards the universe as a great organic whole, a unity, with one underlying cause, pervaded by one spirit, obeying one law, possessing one character, directed to one goal. And as he gives the whole of things a spiritualistic or materialistic, a religious or deistic, an optimistic or a pessimistic interpretation, he must abide by his decision and be ranked accordingly, whilst all his views of nature, humanity, and life take one colour. If he attempts to borrow now from one school, and now from another, his orthodox brethren might reproach him in the words of the great poet :

> Thou hast no faith left now, unless thou hadst two,
> And that's far worse than none ; better have none
> Than plural faith, which is too much by one.

How entirely reasonable, then, is the faith of Christ in demanding an implicit trust, a whole-hearted loyalty ! The most divided counsels of parliaments are not without their points of agreement ; when we remember the doctrines of the convertibility of forces, the transmutations of metals, the mutations of plants and animals, it is felt that at bottom the most incongruous theories of science have a secret kinship ; and in the most discordant systems of philosophy the eclectic discovers correspondences and affinities not to be denied. But between the godly and the godless life, between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world,

between the mind of the spirit and the mind of the flesh, between the ideals of the temporal and the eternal is a total, absolute, eternal antagonism. Moral good and evil are not, as some vainly teach, the two sides of one thing, but two principles between which a great bridgeless gulf is fixed; and our attitude to the Lord Jesus determines the principle of our choice, and on which side of the gulf lies our destiny. 'He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life' (1 John v. 12).

'Beware of the leaven of Herod'! We ever need this admonition in seeking the development of the kingdom of God. Some suppose that in his flattery of the Romans, Herod thought he saw the chance of Rome helping the national aspiration; but if this were so, we know how profoundly he was deceived. In the end the Herods destroyed themselves and the nation whose affairs they administered. We may well be warned against their example. Renan, in his famous misnamed fable, *The Life of Jesus*, instructs us, 'To conceive the good, in fact, is not sufficient; it must be made to succeed amongst men. To accomplish this, less pure paths must be followed.' And he proceeds to inform us that in order to make His work succeed 'Jesus compromised it; for every movement, in order to triumph, must make sacrifices; we never come from the contest of life unscathed.' Precisely what our Lord did not do. He never reduced His lofty claim, never adulterated His pure doctrine, never followed a devious path for the sake of popularity. His Cross is the eternal condemnation of moral compromise, and He can wait for millennia for the triumph of His kingdom. The Church gains nothing by softening the truth with which she has been entrusted, by lowering her standards, or by relaxing her

discipline; she stands for the truth as it is in Jesus, and its integrity is the condition of her triumph. Not for the praise of broad-mindedness, not for the temptation of an accelerated progress, not to escape laboriousness and sacrifice, must we accept comprehension by dubious concession and adjustment. On matters that are secondary and relative there is room for political and ecclesiastical statesmanship, but not when the obligations of faith, spirituality, purity, and righteousness are involved. 'My kingdom is not of this world' is a declaration of the Lord, that ought to be a guiding star to His people in all generations. It will be sweeter to perish with Him than to gain a fugitive triumph by merging the kingdom of God in the kingdoms of this world. As Joseph Cook once wrote, 'When Christianity comes into collision with wrong, evil, and not Christianity, is to compromise.'

'Beware of the leaven of Herod'! Individually we must heed this warning. What have we to gain by any temporizing, even the mildest? What by nibbling at the creed to pacify the critical, after we have proved the sweetness and power of the faith in our own experience? What by relaxing our personal discipline for an indulgence of the flesh, some mess of pottage, which gratifies for the moment? What by gaining worldly advantage in things that perish in the using? We know that we are only losers by such negotiations. And, then, there will always be the anxious thought as to the end of the working of the unwholesome leaven, for its tendency is to leaven the whole lump. Minute admixtures may improve iron and steel, but the addition to gold of one five-hundredth part by weight of bismuth produces an alloy which crumbles under the die and

refuses to take an impression. If we are to receive and retain the image of the King, the gold must be pure. Full consecration to God is the secret of perfect peace; it commands the conquering power; it is the condition of absolute and final safety; whilst a wavering life implies distraction, impotence, insecurity, disaster. Oh, how easy, happy, victorious, fruitful is the decided life! How triumphant its end! We are right only when our whole soul is surrendered to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, and when our life in its entirety is separated to His service. 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever' (Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26).

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